MARVEL MASTERWORKS®

THE FANTASTIC FOUR®

VOLUME 14

THE FANTASTIC FOUR Nos. 142-150
GIANT-SIZE SUPER-STARS No. 1
GIANT-SIZE FANTASTIC FOUR No. 2 & THE AVENGERS No. 127
GERRY CONWAY & RICH BUCKLER

MARVEL

MARVEL MASTERWORKS

PRESENTS

THE Fantastic FOUR

VOLUME 14

COLLECTING

THE FANTASTIC FOUR Nos. 142-150

GIANT-SIZE SUPER-STARS No. 1

GIANT-SIZE FANTASTIC FOUR No. 2 & THE AVENGERS No. 127

GERRY CONWAY • RICH BUCKLER

Collection Editor
Cory Sedlmeier
Book Design
Nickel DesignWorks
SVP of Publishing Sales & Circulation
David Gabriel
SVP of Brand Planning & Communications
Michael Pasciullo
Digital Manager/Production
Tim Smith 3
Digital Production
Kou Chen
Editor in Chief
Axel Alonso
Chief Creative Officer
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CREDITS

THE
FANTASTIC FOUR
NOS. 142-150, GIANT-SIZE SUPER-STARS NO. 1
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Writers: Gerry Conway
Steve Englehart (*The Avengers No. 127*)

Pencilers: Rich Buckler (Nos. 142-144, 147-150; *Giant-Size Super-Stars No. 1*)
Ross Andru (Nos. 145, 146)
John Buscema (Giant-Size Fantastic Four No. 2)
Sal Buscema (*The Avengers No. 127*)

Inkers: Joe Sinnott (Nos. 142, 144-150; *Giant-Size Super-Stars No. 1*)
Frank Giacoia (No. 143)
Chic Stone (Giant-Size Fantastic Four No. 2)
Joe Staton (*The Avengers No. 127*)

Letterers: John Costanza (Nos. 142, 143, 145, 146, 149, 150)
Art Simek (Nos. 144, 147, 148; *Giant-Size Super-Stars No. 1*)
Joe Rosen (Giant-Size Fantastic Four No. 2)
Tom Orzechowski (*The Avengers No. 127*)

Editor: Roy Thomas

Color & Art Reconstruction: All Thumbs Creative

Special Thanks: Ralph Macchio

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ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS
BY GERRY CONWAY

Be careful what you wish for, the saying goes; you just might get it.

And that's when the fun begins.

I use the term "fun" here ironically, of course. Like the proverbial dog who chases a fire truck but would have no idea what to do with it if he ever caught it, I'd wanted to be part of the creative team on *The Fantastic Four* since I first started reading comics, waaaay back in 1961 or so. My first homemade, hand-drawn comic, created when I was in second or third grade, featured my own version of the FF. (In my pitiful first efforts they looked more like Cartman and company from *South Park* than Reed Richards and his would-be fellow astronauts.) In fact, the possibility of eventually having a chance to work on the World's Greatest Comic Magazine was one of the reasons I left DC Comics when Roy Thomas offered me a regular assignment to script Daredevil and Sub-Mariner in the early 1970s.

Oh, silly, silly boy.

More quickly than I could have dreamed when I started working full time for Marvel sometime in 1971, I got my wish, a little less than two years later.

And like that dog who caught the fire truck, I had no idea what to do with my unexpected prize once I had it clamped between my drooling jaws.

Well, at least not right away…

* * *

In the previous volume of Fantastic Four *Marvel Masterworks*, you saw my early efforts to get a handle on the series. With the help of the legendary John Buscema (and some plot assists by editor Roy Thomas) I gradually developed an approach to writing Marvel's premier super-team. In the stories included in this present volume, I tried to put what I'd learned into practice, creating story lines that involved multiple-issue threats to Reed, Sue, Ben, Johnny (and Medusa) while also trying to explore the personal ramifications for each character. Whether I succeeded or not, I leave for you to judge, but I like to think the later stories in this volume show more perspective and professionalism than the tales in the preceding *Marvel Masterworks*.

I'm particularly proud of the concluding story in this volume, featuring the wedding of Crystal of The Inhumans and the Avengers' Quicksilver.

A few words about my collaborator in crime for most of this volume, Rich Buckler.

Over the years I've worked with a number of fine artists and storytellers, and I've been lucky to count among them such legends in the field as Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, John Romita, John Buscema, Marie Severin, Gene Colan, Gil Kane, Neal Adams, José Luis García-López, Ross Andru, Don Heck, Mike Sekowsky, Dick Dillin, George Pérez, Keith Giffen—and those are just some of the *pencilers*. Don't get me started on the inkers and colorists.

Most of them were years older than me, but a few were my contemporaries—George Pérez and Keith Giffen, for example. I stood in awe of people like Kirby and Ditko and Romita and Marie Severin, but when it came to artists in my age range, give or take a few years, I felt more like an equal, someone sharing the same foxhole during a heavy artillery barrage. Guys like George and Keith were of my generation; we were fans as well as professionals, sharing the same can't-believe-they're-paying-me-to-do-this enthusiasm for the work we were privileged to do together. Working in comics, for us, was the fulfillment of a childhood dream.

(I'm not suggesting the same wasn't true for the older artists I worked with, but I'm pretty sure Jack Kirby didn't spend his childhood hoping he'd have the chance to someday chronicle the adventures of the Fantastic Four.)

((Unless he was a time traveler; and come to think of it, considering the futurism of Jack's work in the '60s and '70s, maybe he was!))

(((Whoa.)))

Anyway, point is, for many of us who began our careers in the late '60s and early '70s, writing and drawing comics was a chance to pay homage to our creative heroes. I know, for myself, that much of what I did in the early 1970s represented a conscious effort to emulate what I admired most about the writing of my comic book idols—foremost among them at Marvel, of course, being the Man himself, Stan Lee. For better or worse, at least in the first year or so, I tried to write *Fantastic Four* the way I imagined Stan himself might have written it. So, what you see here represents a combination of my own voice as a writer, and my impression of what Stan would have written if he were still doing the book. As time passed, of course, I spoke more with my own voice and less with Stan's, but in the beginning I consciously tried to channel Stan's sensibility through my own.

Which brings us to Rich Buckler.

Rich, as you can easily see from his work included here, was (and still is, I imagine) a huge fan of Jack Kirby's work on the Fantastic Four, particularly in the mid- to late-1960s. Just as I tried to channel Stan as a writer, I believe Rich tried to channel Jack as an artist.

For this, Rich received considerable grief from a few purists among the more self-important members of the fan press of the day.

As someone who's been accused of being more imitator than innovator at various points in my career (yet who somehow still managed to create my share of memorable characters and story lines along the way) I'm more than a little sensitive to the kind of criticism that was leveled against Rich for his attempt to replicate Kirby's style and story-telling. I consider the criticism to be small-minded, arrogant, and fundamentally misguided. To my way of thinking, criticizing an artist who's clearly attempting to consciously replicate another artist's style for doing so is like criticizing a cover band for being a cover band. Rich made no bones about what he was trying to accomplish. He wanted to recreate the experience of reading the late-'60s Fantastic Four as drawn by Jack Kirby. Rich wasn't trying to pass off his art as Jack's; nor was he trying to pass off Jack's art as his own. He was recreating, and in the process, re-contextualizing, an art style that that he—and we—loved.

And in my opinion, he did so brilliantly.

Take a look at *Giant-Size Super-Stars* No. 1 if you don't believe me.

If that's not one of the best Thing vs. Hulk fights you've ever seen…in the *style* of the King himself, by someone other than Kirby…then please, point me to one that surpasses it.

Sure, it's derivative—but in part, that's the point. Rich and I wanted to recapture the feeling of a mid-'60s issue of the Fantastic Four, full of bombast and hyperbole, posturing and absurdity. In that story, and in several others included in this *Masterworks* edition, I like to believe we succeeded as well as anyone not named Stan and Jack could have done.

And if we—and you—had some fun along the way, what's wrong with that?

After all, when you try to rise to new heights, it helps to stand on the shoulders of giants.

Who knows? With luck, and a little growth, maybe you'll end up a giant yourself someday.

2012

FANTASTIC FOUR

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

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TM

THE COMING OF...

DARKOTH

--THE DEATH-DEMON!

BLOCKBUSTER BONUS: DON'T DARE MISS THE SHOCKING LAST PAGE APPEARANCE... OF THE MOST SINISTER SUPER-VILLAIN OF ALL!

BUCKLER & SINNOTT

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

GERRY CONWAY SCRIPTER * JOE SINNOTT EMBELLISHER * J. COSTANZA, letterer PETRA G., Colorist * ROY THOMAS EDITOR *

AND LET'S HEAR A HEARTY WELCOME FOR: RICH BUCKLER ARTIST

NO FRIEND BESIDE HIM!

WE STUCK WITH YA THROUGH A LOTTA **BAD TIMES**, RICHARDS. WE WOULD'A FOLLOWED YA **ANYWHERE**-- DONE ANY-THING YA **ASKED**-- 'CAUSE WE **BELIEVED** IN YA.

BUT WHEN A MAN DOES WHAT **YOU** JUST DID TO YER OWN **KID**-- MISTER, THAT'S THE **BOTTOM LINE.**

SWAK!

FACE IT, RICHARDS. THIS IS **IT**--

THE END OF THE **FANTASTIC FOUR!**

*A MAN DOES WHAT HE **MUST** DO-- BUT WHEN FOLLOWING HIS DUTY MEANS ENDANGERING HIS OWN **CHILD**, EVEN THE **STRONGEST** MEN MAY TURN AWAY.*

*REED RICHARDS **DID NOT** TURN AWAY-- AND BECAUSE HE DID NOT, HE'S NOW THE MOST **TORMENTED** MAN **ALIVE!***

*OR, IF HE'S **NOT**--HE SOON **WILL** BE--!*

BUT REED RICHARDS IS NOT THE FOCUS OF OUR STORY TODAY--

THIS MAN IS--!

SLAM!

BEN GRIMM--

--THE THING!

SO WHERE DO I GO NOW? MY WHOLE LIFE FER THE PAST COUPLE'A YEARS WAS HERE--

HERE WITH THE FF... WITH REED, AND POOR OL' SUZIE.

BUT NOW THAT'S GONE SOUR.

I GOTTA GET OUT-- BUT WHERE--?

WAITAMINUTE... THIS LETTER FROM ALICIA.

TELEGRAM

I AIN'T OPENED IT YET. MEBBE SHE'S GOT AN IDEA.

MEBBE SHE'LL KNOW WHAT TA DO.

SEVENTEEN HOURS LATER: IN A JET OVER EASTERN EUROPE...

GOTTA HAND IT TA ALICIA... SHE CAN PICK 'EM.

WHY SHE HADDA GO TA SOME LITTLE COUNTRY IN THE BALKANS FER HER VACATION BEATS ME...

... AND THIS AIN'T EXACTLY TOURIST SEASON, EITHER.

I GOT A FEELIN' ALICIA DIDN'T TELL ME EVERY-THING IN THAT LETTER OF HERS--

--AN' MEBBE SHE AIN'T GONNA BE AS GLAD TA HAVE ME COME VISITIN' AS I THOUGHT SHE'D BE.

HUH? NOW WHAT'SAMATTER WITH THAT CREEP?

SAY-- WHAT IS THIS, SOME KINDA MENAGERIE? I PAID FOR FIRST CLASS-- NOT ANIMAL STORAGE.

SIR? I DON'T QUITE UNDER-STAND--?

I'M TALKIN' ABOUT THAT, LADY. THAT-- THAT THING!

RIGHT THE FIRST TIME, BUDDY... I AM A THING... AN ORANGE-SKINNED, BLUE-EYED MONSTRO-SITY.

AND AFTER WHAT I'VE BEEN THROUGH THE PAST TWO DAYS-- MAYBE I SHOULDN'T BE ALLOWED TA SIT WITH DECENT PEOPLE!

AW, NUTS. WAS IT MY FAULT THE BUNCH OF US GOT CAPTURED BY THAT ANNIHILUS JOKER-- THAT HE TOOK US BACK TA THE NEGATIVE ZONE, SO'S HE COULD SOAK UP ENERGY FROM REED'S KID? *

MAYBE I COULDA DONE SUMTHIN'-- AND MAYBE NOT. THERE'S JUST NO WAY OF TELLIN' NOW--

NOW THAT IT'S ALL OVER.

AND BROTHER, IS IT EVER ALL OVER! I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE REED USED THAT ANTI-MATTER GIZMO OF HIS ON LITTLE FRANKLIN--!

EVEN IF THE KID WAS GETTIN' SET TO EXPLODE, THERE SHOULDA BEEN ANOTHER WAY!

A GUY WHO'D DO THAT TA HIS OWN BOY... GIVES ME THE CHILLS.

GUESS WHAT BUGS ME THE MOST IS-- I'M THE KID'S GODFATHER. I SHOULD'A DONE SUMTHIN'--

*IT HAPPENED LAST ISSUE.--RT.

--BUT I JUST STOOD THERE GAWKIN' WHILE REED TURNED HIS KID INTO A BLASTED VEGETABLE!

MAKES ME WANNA CLOBBER SOMEBODY-- JUST TA GET IT OFF MY CHEST.

HEY, YOU-- FREAK!

WHAT RIGHT HAVE YOU GOT TO SIT HERE WITH NORMAL FOLK?

I'VE GOT HALF A MIND TO--

YOU GOT HALF A MIND-- PERIOD!

NOW SCRAM-- BEFORE I MAKE A PAPER PLANE OUTTA YOU--DIG?

THANKFULLY, BEN'S ANGER HAS SUBSIDED SOMEWHAT WHEN THE JET LANDS AT A SMALL BALKAN AIRPORT A SHORT WHILE LATER...

...BUT IT FLARES UP AGAIN WHEN HE SEES...

MR. GRIMM IS APPROACHING, MISS MASTERS.

HE'S PRECISELY AS YOU DE-SCRIBED HIM.

I'D RECOGNIZE HIS FOOTSTEPS ANYWHERE!

BEN! OH, BEN!

THANK HEAVEN YOU CAME! I WAS SO AFRAID-- SO WORRIED YOU WOULDN'T RECEIVE MY LETTER IN TIME!

SO WHAT'S ONE MORE VACATION, HONEY?

IT AIN'T A MATTER OF LIFE AN' DEATH--

IS IT?

WE CERTAINLY HOPE IT WON'T BE, MR. GRIMM. STILL... THESE OPERATIONS MAY SOMETIMES DEVELOP... COMPLICATIONS.

WHO THE HECK ARE YOU, BOZO?

I AM HANS STUTGART--

MISS MASTERS' DOCTOR.

HUH?

SOON, AFTER STUTGART HAS LEFT AND ALICIA HAS EXPLAINED SOMETHING OF THE PAST FEW DAYS...

SO THIS GUY THINKS HE CAN GET YER SIGHT BACK, HUH?

THAT'S SWELL, KID.

HE'S A BRILLIANT MAN, BEN, HE WROTE TO ME-- HE'D HEARD OF MY CASE THROUGH A FRIEND.

IT'S A MINOR OPERATION, HE SAYS-- AN OPERATION THAT HASN'T BEEN POSSIBLE UNTIL RECENTLY--

BEN? ARE YOU THERE?

YEAH... I WUZ JUST NOTICIN' SUMTHIN'...

EVERYBODY IN THIS CRAZY VILLAGE IS CUTTIN' OUT... LIKE THEY WERE AFRAID'A THE DARK, OR SUMTHIN'.

MEBBE IT'S ME, HUH? MEBBE THEY AIN'T EVER SEEN A GUY WITH ORANGE BRICKS FOR SKIN BEFORE.

NO, BEN... IT ISN'T YOU.

DR. STUTGART TOLD ME THERE'S A LEGEND... OF SOME SORT OF DEATH-DEMON WHICH STALKS THE HILLS AT NIGHT.

NO ONE GOES OUT AFTER DARK, YOU SEE-- IT'S JUST A SILLY SUPERSTITION..

WELL, MEBBE IT'S TIME YA GOT BACK TA THE HOSPITAL ANY-WAY. C'MON, KID... I'LL WALK YA.

WHY?
WHY?
WHY?
WHY COULDN'T I HAVE FOUND ANOTHER WAY? WHY DID I HAVE TO HURT HIM--WHY?
BAM!
REED, PLEASE... YOU MUSTN'T BLAME YOURSELF!
YOU DID WHAT YOU HAD TO DO!
WHAT SORT OF ANSWER IS THAT, MEDUSA?
CRACK!
WILL THAT GIVE MY SON BACK TO ME?
WILL IT MAKE MY WIFE LOVE ME AGAIN-- WILL IT CHANGE ANY-THING?
DON'T YOU SEE WHAT I'VE DONE?
STOP IT, REED! I SAID STOP IT!
I WON'T LET YOU PUNISH YOURSELF THIS WAY.
PLEASE... LET'S GET OUT OF HERE ...GO SOMEWHERE FOR DINNER.
YOU NEED TO GET AWAY, REED.
PLEASE LET ME HELP YOU.
AND SO, AN HOUR LATER, AFTER REED HAS CALMED HIMSELF, AND THE RED-TRESSED INHUMAN HAS ARRANGED RESERVATIONS...
THIS IS A MISTAKE, MEDUSA.
THERE'S NO POINT TO THIS!
OF COURSE THERE IS, REED. YOU HAVE TO FORGIVE YOURSELF--
YOU CAN'T DO THAT AROUND HERE, CONSTANTLY REMINDED OF SUE AND FRANKLIN.
HMMM... WHAT'S THIS?
THAT? AN INVITATION TO AN ALUMNI MEETING-- OF MY OLD COLLEGE CLASS.
I RECEIVED IT A FEW DAYS AGO. NATURALLY, I CAN'T GO NOW.
YOU'RE GOING, REED.
INVITAT
EVEN IF I HAVE TO DRAG YOU, YOU'RE GOING.

AT THE MOMENT, WE'RE NOT INTERESTED IN REED'S FRUSTRATED PROTESTS--RIGHT NOW, LET'S CONCERN OURSELVES WITH THE THING, WHO'S FEELING RATHER LONELY NOW THAT HE'S DROPPED ALICIA AT THE HOSPITAL.

SO SHE'S GONNA BE ABLE TA SEE AT LAST, HUH?

GUESS IT'S TIME FER ME TA BUG OUT.

SHE AIN'T GONNA HAVE MUCH USE FOR A LUMP LIKE ME ONCE SHE AIN'T BLIND ANYMORE.

(NEED WE POINT OUT THIS MYSTERIOUS FIGURE? WE THOUGHT NOT.)

I MIGHT AS WELL FACE IT... ME AN' ALICIA ARE THROUGH.

SURE, SHE'LL STICK WITH ME FER A WHILE... BUT IT WOULDN'T BE OUTTA LOVE...

...'CAUSE WHO COULD EVER LOVE A MESS'A UGLINESS... LIKE THE THING?

SO LOST IN HIS OWN THOUGHTS IS BEN GRIMM--

--HE DOESN'T NOTICE THE MANLIKE CREATURE STALKING HIM--

--UNTIL THE CREATURE PREPARES TO LUNGE--

--AND BY THEN, IT'S ALREADY MUCH TOO LATE!

HEY! WHO'S THE WISE GUY?

WHO'S THE WISE GUY?

KA-BAM!

I STRIKE, MORTAL--I, WHO HAVE CLIMBED FROM THE FETID PITS OF HELL!

I, WHOSE NAME IS SPOKEN IN WHISPERS--WHOSE POWER IS KNOWN AND FEARED BY ALL WHO WORSHIP EVIL!

I AM BUT SLAVE TO MY MASTER--BUT TO ALL WHO WALK THIS FALLOW GLOBE, I AM DARKOTH--THE DEATH-DEMON!

OH, YEAH? MEBBE THAT CUTS ICE AROUND THIS BURG, BUDDY--

--BUT BACK IN THE BIG LEAGUES, WORDS AIN'T WORTH BEANS.

I GOTTA ADMIT, YA GOT YERSELF A NICE PUNCH--

--BUT THIS WUZ MY SUNDAY SUIT YA RUINED--

--AND SONNY, YOU JUST GOT ME MAD!

THE MASTER PREDICTED THIS REACTION.

HE SAID YOU WERE TOO STUPID TO FEEL FEAR.

YA KNOW SUMTHIN', PAL?

ANY SANE MORTAL IN YOUR POSITION WOULD BE GROVELING.

YET... PERHAPS I PREFER IT THIS WAY.

THERE WILL BE PLEASURE IN REDUCING YOU TO A MASS OF BABBLING HYSTERIA!

MAYBE HE WUZ RIGHT!

UNDOUBTEDLY...!

SPUNCH!

DON'T HOLD YER BREATH, SWEET-HEART.

HEY--THOSE ANTLERS ON YER HEAD--THEY'RE GLOWIN'! WHAT--?

THEY DO FAR MORE THAN **GLOW,** BEN GRIMM.

THEY **STRIKE...** AND THEY **DESTROY!**

FEELS LIKE-- ONE'A STRECHO'S DUMB **MACHINES!**

CUT IT **OUT,** BLAST IT!

THE **FIREHORNS** ARE FAR MORE THAN ONE OF YOUR FORMER FRIEND'S FOOLISH **TOYS,** MORTAL --!

THEY FEED ON YOUR HIGHER **BRAIN** FUNCTIONS-- AND THEY DISSOLVE YOUR **MIND,** FROM **WITHIN!**

BUNK!

SKRUPPPT!

I'VE BEEN WORKED OVER BY **EXPERTS--**

MISTER, YOU AIN'T EVEN IN THE **LEAGUE!**

WISH I FELT AS GOOD AS I'M **TALKIN'--** BUDDY BOY'S GIZMO **WORKS!** MY HEAD'S COMIN' APART LIKE A WEEK-OLD **BALLOON!**

GOTTA WRAP THIS UP **FAST--** OR I'M **DOGFOOD!**

SHAK!

IMBECILE!

WHAT HOPE HAVE **YOU** TO DEFEAT **ME?**

I, WHOSE POWER COMES FROM THE WORLD **BEYOND--** I, DARKOTH-- **THE INVINCIBLE!**

BUT AS THE DEATH-DEMON BRINGS BACK HIS TALONED HAND TO PUSH HIMSELF **ERECT--**

SCRAPE!

FOOM!

WHOOPS.

I DON'T *BELIEVE* IT. HANDSOME MUST'A MADE A *SPARK* OR SUMTHIN'-- SET OFF THE GAS IN THAT STREET-LAMP LIKE IT WUZ SOME KINDA *BOMB!*

ONE SECOND I'M FIGHTIN' FER MY *LIFE*-- AN' THE NEXT, I'M STANDIN' HERE LIKE A JERK WITH HIS BLAMED *CLOTHES* RIPPED OFF!

IT'S *HUMILIATIN'!*

BEN! BEN, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

HUH? *ALICIA!* WHAT THE HECK 'RE *YOU* DOIN' HERE, KID?

IT'S *MY* DOING, MR. GRIMM.

WE HEARD A *COM-MOTION*-- MISS MASTERS RECOGNIZED YOUR *VOICE*--

AND YA JUST TROTTED HER *OUT* HERE LIKE A GOOD LITTLE *BOY SCOUT.*

THANKS A *LOT,* STUTGART.

WHAT'S *WRONG,* BEN? AREN'T YOU GLAD I'M *HERE?*

IS IT SOMETHING I'VE *DONE*-- SOMETHING I'VE *SAID?*

I WISH I COULD *ANSWER* THAT, KID.

NUTHIN' LIKE *THAT.*

I JUST CAN'T HELP *THINKIN'*--

THAT *DEATH-DEMON* BOZO KNEW MY *NAME* AND ALL ABOUT ME-- LIKE HE'D BEEN SENT TA *GET* ME.

NOBODY *STATESIDE* KNEW I WUZ *COMIN'* HERE--

--AND THE ONLY PERSON I'VE TOLD ABOUT *REED*-- IS *YOU,* SWEETHEART. AND LADY, THAT'S SUMTHIN' I GOTTA *THINK* ABOUT-- REAL *BAD.*

AND WHILE BEN'S PONDERING THIS APPARENT MYSTERY, WE'LL LOOK IN ON ANOTHER FORMER MEMBER OF OUR FAVORITE EX-TEAM...

JOHNNY STORM... THE HUMAN TORCH!
THERE IT IS BELOW, WYATT.
METRO U.!
YOU'RE THE LEADER, TORCH.
WHAT'S UP, FRIEND? YOU DON'T SOUND HAPPY.
I JUST GRADUATED FROM METRO, JOHNNY--
--AND I WISH I WERE RETURNING UNDER MORE PLEASANT AUSPICES.
DON'T WE ALL.
HEY-- THERE'S COACH THORNE NOW.
DO YOU WANT TO BREAK THE NEWS ABOUT REED-- OR SHALL I?
YOU KNOW HIM BETTER THAN I DO, WYATT.
HE'S REED'S OLD COLLEGE BUDDY-- AND YOU'RE HIS.
BUT, WHEN THE TOWERING MR. WINGFOOT HAS RELATED HIS TALE...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU WANT ME TO SAY, JOHNNY...
IF IT MEANS ANYTHING, I'M SORRY... FOR REED, AND FOR YOU.
FOR REED?
MAYBE YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND -- FRANKLIN'S MY NEPHEW. SUE IS MY SISTER.
AND YOU'RE SORRY FOR REED?
BUT, JOHNNY-- REED HAD NO CHOICE!
SORRY, COACH-- I DON'T BUY IT.
FROM HIM-- OR FROM YOU!
MY APOLOGIES. I STILL DON'T KNOW WHY JOHNNY WANTED TO COME HERE.
HE NEEDED SOMEONE TO AGREE WITH HIM, WYATT-- SOMEONE WHO KNEW REED, AND WHOM JOHNNY COULD RESPECT.
GUESS I'M NOT THAT MAN.
IT'S ODD, THOUGH... I'LL BE SEEING REED IN A FEW DAYS.
OUR CLASS IS HAVING A REUNION...
"... AND IT SEEMS I'VE BEEN INVITED."
DON'T YOU WORRY, FRANKLIN...
WE'LL BE AT YOUR AUNT CAROL'S IN JUST A LITTLE WHILE.
EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT, THEN...
NO ONE WILL HURT YOU AGAIN.

PENNSYLVANIA IS A **PEACEFUL** LAND... A PLACE TO **REST**, A PLACE TO **ESCAPE** TO, WHERE A WOMAN CAN PUT BACK THE BROKEN **PIECES** OF HER WORLD...

...EVEN A WORLD AS **SHATTERED** AS SUSAN RICHARD'S...**THE INVISIBLE GIRL.**

SUE...YOU'RE **BACK?**

DID REED AND THE OTHERS **FIND** YOU?*

*FF #140. --RT.

IT ALL COMES POURING OUT THEN, IN WORDS BARELY **COHERENT**, IN PHRASES MIXED WITH SOBS...AND SENTENCES FILLED WITH **TEARS.**

AND ALL CAROL LINDERS CAN DO...IS **COMFORT** THE FORMER MISS SUSAN STORM.

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS LATER, OUTSIDE AN OPERATING ROOM IN A SMALL BALKAN **CITY...**

NO, MR. GRIMM... YOU CANNOT **ACCOMPANY** HER.

SHE'S **SEDATED**... IN LESS THAN TEN MINUTES, WE **OPERATE.**

YEAH. I SEE.

I JUST WANTED TA **TELL** HER-- I WUZ **WRONG** ABOUT SUMTHIN'!

AND I'M **SORRY**-- ABOUT SOME THINGS I **SAID.**

THE DOCTOR **NODS.** HE TURNS AWAY. AND BEN GRIMM IS **ALONE** ONCE MORE...

...AS HE HAS **EVER** BEEN...AND PROBABLY ALWAYS **WILL** BE.

NUTS, WHAT'M I **WORRIED** ABOUT?

IT'S JUST A BLASTED **OPERATION.**

BUT THIS IS FOR MORE THAN "JUST AN OPERATION"... AND AS THE SECONDS BECOME MINUTES, AND THE MINUTES **HOURS,** BEN GRIMM BEGINS TO FEEL THE PRESSURE EATING AT HIS **SOUL...**

THREE HOURS? SUMTHIN'S **SCREWY** AROUND HERE.

QUIET

I AIN'T HEARD A **SOUND** IN THERE SINCE THEM JOKERS WENT **IN.**

AND WHILE I'M A REGULAR **PUSSYCAT** AT HEART--

--WHEN IT COMES TA MY **GIRL,** WHEN IT LOOKS LIKE SUMTHIN'S **HAPPENED** TA HER--

--SOMEHOW I KINDA LOSE **CONTROL.**

OKAY, THIS IS A *RAID.*

I WANNA KNOW WHAT'S GOIN' *ON*-- AN' I WANNA KNOW *NOW.*

ARE THEY *HURTIN'* YA, ALICIA, HONEY?

JUST GIVE THE *WORD,* AND I'LL--

HUH?

SOMEBODY'S GOTTA BE PULLIN' MY *LEG!*

I *SAW* ALICIA AND THOSE *DOCTOR* STOOGES COME IN HERE-- THERE AIN'T NO OTHER WAY *OUT--*

BUT THE WHOLE JOINT'S *EMPTY!*

IF SOMEBODY DON'T COME UP WITH SOME ANSWERS *--FAST--* IN ABOUT TEN SECONDS I'M GONNA START *BUSTIN' THINGS!*

THAT WON'T BE *NECESSARY,* MORTAL.

I HAVE *SEVERAL* ANSWERS FOR YOU *NOW--*

--AND THEY ALL BEGIN WITH--

THOM!

MISTER, THAT JUST AIN'T *FUNNY.*

FUNNY, BEN GRIMM? DARKOTH KNOWS NOT THE MEANING OF HUMOR.

ONLY DEATH MATTERS TO DARKOTH!

YA SANG THAT SONG BEFORE, PUNK.

NOW YA GOT SOME EXPLAININ' TA DO--PRONTO!

BUT, AS THE THING LIFTS HIMSELF TO HIS FEET--

--IN A ROOM FIVE HUNDRED YARDS DISTANT--

--AN ARMORED HAND CLOSES A FATAL SWITCH--

--AND THE OPERATING ROOM WALL SLIDES BACK BEHIND THE BELEAGUERED BEN GRIMM!

WHIRRK

A DOOR! A LOUSY SLIDIN' DOOR--

--LEADING TO SOME KINDA CAVERN!

THAT MUST BE HOW THEY GOT ALICIA OUTTA HERE-- BUT THAT STILL DOESN'T EXPLAIN WHY--??

UNNNH!

NOR NEED YOU EVER LEARN THE REASON BEHIND THESE MACHINATIONS!

THE MASTER HAS ORDAINED THESE DEEDS DONE--AND THEY ARE DONE!

AND YOU, BEN GRIMM-- ARE A DEAD MAN!

SPRAK!

I ASKED YA *PRETTY PLEASE* TA TELL ME WHAT'S GOIN' *ON.*

BUT YA JUST WON'T *LISTEN.*

GUESS I GOTTA TEACH YA A *LESSON,* DARKLY-- OR *WHATEVER* YA NAME IS.

IF THERE'S ONE THING YA *NEVER* DO--IT'S RILE OL' BLUE-EYED *BENJAMIN.*

NOT UNLESS YA GOT YER *LIFE INSURANCE* PAID UP--

'CAUSE, BUDDY-- PATIENT AS I'VE *BEEN,* THERE COMES A POINT WHEN--

WHIK!

WHAK!

IT'S *CLOBBERIN'* TIME!

WHOK!

CAN YA BEAT *THAT?* I KNOCKED HIM OFF A BLASTED *UNDERGROUND CLIFF.*

NAH. *TOO EASY.* THERE'S GOTTA BE A *CATCH.*

MEBBE IF I TAKE A LOOK AROUND THAT *HOSPITAL,* I'LL--

HEY! THE SLIDIN' DOORS--THEY'RE *CLOSED!*

THAT STUFF'S MADE OUTTA SOLID *TITANIUM ALLOY.* IT'D TAKE ME AT LEAST AN *HOUR* TA BUST THROUGH-- AND *THEN* WHERE AM I?

ALICIA AIN'T BACK *THERE*--SHE'S *HERE* SOMEWHERE.

AND I'VE GOT A PRETTY GOOD IDEA WHERE TA START *LOOKIN'* TOO.

IF THIS *DEATH-DEMON* PUNK CAN COME BACK FROM A *GAS EXPLOSION*--

-- CHANCES ARE A *HIGH DIVE* AIN'T EXACTLY GONNA *KILL* 'IM.

HE LET ME KNOCK HIM IN HERE FER A *REASON*--

-- AND I'M GONNA FIND OUT WHAT THAT REASON *IS*.

*BUT, AS THE THING DIVES **DEEP** INTO THE SUBTERRANEAN POOL, IN A ROOM ONLY **FOUR HUNDRED YARDS** DISTANT NOW--*

POOL SHUTTERS

*--AN ARMORED FIST PULLS A **LEVER**, AND --*

BTOOM!

WHUZZAT?

SHUTTERS-- CLOSIN' OFF THE *TOP* OF THIS CRUMMY EXCUSE FER A *WADIN' POOL*?

THINGS'RE STARTIN' TA GIT *INTRISTIN'*!

THAT GLOW UP AHEAD MUST BE WHERE *DREK-FACE* GOT OFF TA.

WELL, NOBODY EVER *SAID* OL' BENJAMIN WUZ *SHY*.

SAY, THIS IS SOME *SET-UP*. EVERYTHIN'S ALL LIT LIKE A BLASTED *CHRISTMAS TREE*.

AN' OVER AGAINST THE FAR *WALL* -- SOME SORTA FANCY *MACHINERY*. LOOKS LIKE IT WANDERED HERE OUTTA REED'S *LAB*.

WHAT'S ALL *THIS* GOT TA DO WITH WALKIN' *BOGEY MEN*?

SUMTHIN' TELLS ME I AIN'T GONNA *LIKE* THE ANSWER TA THAT. THERE'S ONLY *ONE* EUROPEAN COUNTRY WITH THE *KNOW-HOW* TO--

WELL, *WHAD-DYA KNOW!*

YOU AGAIN!

THE MASTER COMMANDS ONE *FINAL* ATTACK.

DARKOTH *OBEYS* HIM WHO *SUMMONED* ME!

GOOD FER *YOU,* BUNKIE.

THAT AN' *FIFTY CENTS* MIGHT GET YOU A CUP'A *COFFEE,* BUT--*EEEYOW!*

RRIPP!

THAT HURTS!

THAT *DOES* IT, PAL.

ALL BETS ARE *OFF.* NOW I'M OUT FER *BLOOD!*

WHAM!

YER GONNA TELL ME WHAT I WANNA *KNOW--*

--AN' YER GONNA TELL ME *NOW--*

--OR I'LL *DEMOLISH* YA!

SPOW!

BUT, AS THE LUMBERING BENJAMIN GRIMM TAKES A STEP TOWARD THE OPENING IN THE **WALL**-- HE **STUMBLES**-- GRUNTS--

--AND **FALLS.**

PAIN IN MY ARM --MUST'A BEEN SOME SORTA **POISON**-- CAN'T-- KEEP MY **EYES** OPEN-- CAN'T-- *UNNNNH*

BEN! DARLING, ARE YOU **THERE?** HAVE THEY **HURT** YOU?

I ASSURE YOU, MY DEAR, THE ERSTWHILE MR. GRIMM IS QUITE **ALL RIGHT**--ASIDE FROM A FEW **MINOR** INJURIES.

YOU HAVE MADE A MOST **EXCELLENT** BAIT!

NOW IT IS TIME FOR ME TO PROCEED TO HOOK **OTHER** FISH, FAR MORE **VULNER-ABLE** THAN THE POWERFUL **THING.**

*TWO DAYS LATER, IN THE FOYER OF A MANHATTAN **TOWNHOUSE** LEASED BY THE ALUMNI COMMITTEE OF **STATE UNIVERSITY**...*

REED RICHARDS... AND **MRS.** RICHARDS, I PRESUME?

NOT MRS. RICHARDS, MY FRIEND.

I'M JUST A **GUEST.**

BUT OF **COURSE,** MISS. WILL YOU COME THIS WAY?

I DON'T KNOW WHY I LET YOU TALK ME **INTO** THIS, MEDUSA.

THERE'S NOTHING HERE FOR ME... BUT **MEMORIES.**

AT LEAST THEY'LL BE MORE PLEASANT THAN THOSE AT THE **BAXTER BUILDING.**

PERHAPS.

ODD... THESE **PAINTINGS**... I'VE SEEN THEM **BEFORE** SOMEWHERE.

*BUT, BEFORE REED CAN **SPECULATE** FURTHER ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF THE TOWNHOUSE **DECORATIONS**--*

REED RICHARDS! I WAS **HOPING** I'D RUN INTO YOU HERE!

SAM! SAM THORNE! GOOD HEAVENS, MAN--

HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN-- ***TEN YEARS?***

TOO LONG, REED. ***MUCH*** TOO LONG.

WE HAVE A LOT TO **TALK** ABOUT, REED.

I SAW **JOHNNY** THE OTHER DAY. HE'S QUITE **UPSET.**

I'M SORRY TO **HEAR** THAT, SAM. HE'S--

SIRS AND MADAMS... DINNER IS **SERVED.**

WHAT--? BUT WE'RE THE ONLY ONES **HERE!**

NOT *QUITE*, SIR!

THERE *IS* ONE OTHER.

YOU! AFTER ALL THESE *MONTHS*-- YOU'VE DARED TO STRIKE *AGAIN*?

WHO *IS* HE, REED? I'VE NEVER--

OF COURSE--YOU WOULDN'T HAVE.

BUT STILL, YOU *DO* KNOW HIM, SAM... BUT HOW COULD YOU *RECOGNIZE* OUR OLD CLASSMATE...

DOCTOR DOOM!

WELCOME TO OUR LITTLE *REUNION*, GENTLEMEN.

PLEASE TAKE YOUR *SEATS*. DINNER WILL BE SERVED IN A *MOMENT*.

WE HAVE MUCH TO *DISCUSS*, WE THREE: OLD FRIENDSHIPS, OLD *BETRAYALS*... AND OF COURSE, THE MOST *IMPORTANT* TOPIC--

--THE RAPIDLY-APPROACHING *END OF THE WORLD!*

NEXT ISSUE THE FINAL SOLUTION

FANTASTIC FOUR

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

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FANTASTIC FOUR

TM

GET SET FOR THE GREATEST **BATTLE ISSUE** EVER!

HE'S BACK!! THE ONE MAN WHO CAN **DESTROY** THE FABULOUS F.F.!

THE TERRIBLE TRIUMPH OF DR. DOOM!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

GERRY CONWAY / SCRIPT / RICH BUCKLER / ARTIST / FRANK GIACOIA / INKER / JOHN COSTANZA, letterer / P. GOLDBERG, colorist / ROY THOMAS / EDITOR

THE TERRIBLE TRIUMPH OF DOCTOR DOOM!

THAT'S *RIGHT*, RICHARDS-- *ATTACK ME.*

IT'S THE REACTION I *EXPECTED* FROM A MAN OF YOUR SOMEWHAT *INFERIOR* INTELLIGENCE!

LAST ISSUE, WE SAW THE *END* OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR--AND IN THE ENSUING TURMOIL, THE UNEXPECTED *CAPTURE* OF THE THING BY DOCTOR DOOM! NOW, THE MONARCH OF LATVERIA *CONTINUES* HIS AS-YET-UNREVEALED MASTER PLAN--BY TRICKING REED RICHARDS AND MEDUSA INTO A CAREFULLY WOVEN *TRAP!*

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE *UP* TO, DOOM--BUT I'M GOING TO *STOP* IT--

--*ANY WAY I CAN!*

WHEW! HOW'S *THAT* FOR A BRIEF SYNOPSIS?

OH? AND HOW DO YOU *PROPOSE* TO STOP ME, RICHARDS?

WITH PHYSICAL *FORCE?*

IF NECESSARY, DOOM-- *YES.*

THEN STEAL YOURSELF FOR A *SURPRISE,* OLD COLLEAGUE...

...FOR YOU'RE ABOUT TO DISCOVER HOW *USELESS* YOUR PITIABLE *STRETCHING* POWERS ARE...

...AGAINST A MAN POSSESSING THE SCIENTIFIC *WIZARDRY*... OF *VICTOR VON DOOM!*

REED! SOME SORT OF FORCE FIELD..!

--WE SHOULD HAVE *GUESSED* HE WOULDN'T REVEAL HIMSELF TO US IF HE WERE *UNPROTECTED!*

WE'LL HAVE TO TRY *ANOTHER* APPROA--*WHAT?*

THE *WALLS,* MEDUSA...THEY'RE RISING INTO THE *CEILING!*

BRACE YOURSELF. HE'S GOING TO *ATTACK!*

HOW CORRECT YOU *ARE,* REED RICHARDS...

...AFTER THESE MANY MONTHS OF INACTIVITY, MONTHS SPENT IN PLOTTING THIS, MY MOST *AMBITIOUS* PROJECT...I AM MORE THAN *AMUSED* BY THE PROSPECT OF A BATTLE OF *WITS*...

...THOUGH I FEAR THAT WITH *YOU* AS MY OPPONENT... THE STRUGGLE MIGHT WELL BE *BRIEF.*

MINE IS THE FIRST *MOVE,* RICHARDS...

IT MAY *ALSO* BE THE *LAST!*

SAM, TAKE YOUR WIFE AND GET *OUT* OF HERE.

THIS IS NO PLACE FOR A COLLEGE *FOOT-BALL COACH*--EVEN IF YOU *DID* RECEIVE AN ENGRAVED *INVITATION!*

YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME *TWICE,* REED.

WAIT--THAT SWIVELING *GUNSIGHT*--!

IT'S TRACKING *AFTER* YOU, SAM! DOOM MUST WANT *YOU* AS BADLY AS HE WANTS *ME*--

--AND SINCE *WE* HAVE ABILITIES YOU *DON'T* HAVE--

--IT'S UP TO MEDUSA AND I TO *PROTECT* Y--

IRAK!

UUUUUNNNNH!

KREEEEE

SKRAK

REED!

COACH THORNE, DO AS REED *SAID.* I'LL TRY TO *NEUTRALIZE* THESE WEAPONS--

--WHICH MAY NOT BE AS DIFFICULT AS YOU'D *THINK*--

--FOR AN *INHUMAN* BORN WITH *LIVING HAIR!*

MEDUSA--YOU CAN'T *FIGHT* HIM! ESCAPE WHILE YOU *CAN* ESCAPE--

IRAK!

AND LEAVE *YOU?*

SORRY, REED... TOO *MANY* OF YOUR FRIENDS HAVE ABAN-- DONED YOU.*

I'M NOT GOING TO BE *ONE* OF THEM.

YOU DISPLAY A WIT AND SKILL I WOULDN'T HAVE *EXPECTED* IN A WOMAN, MY DEAR *INHUMAN.*

A PITY SUCH ENTERPRISE IS *WASTED* ON A CAUSE LONG *LOST*...

...A BATTLE AGAINST YOUR OBVIOUS *SUPERIOR.*

*MEDUSA IS REFERRING TO BEN GRIMM AND JOHNNY STORM -- WHO *QUIT* THE FF LAST ISSUE. --RT.

ON ANOTHER OCCASSION, I MIGHT WISH TO PROLONG THIS FUTILE STRUGGLE... BUT TODAY, MY HEART GOES OUT TO YOU...

...AND SO I'LL END IT...

...THE ONLY WAY IT CAN BE ENDED... WITH THE UNQUESTIONABLE VICTORY OF DOCTOR DOOM!

FOR THE MOMENT, LET ME BID YOU ADIEU! I ASSURE YOU... WE WILL MEET AGAIN... VERY, VERY SOON.

THE FLOOR'S FOLDING OPEN BENEATH THEM--THEY DON'T HAVE A CHANCE!

THROOM

YOU SHOW AN AMAZING AMOUNT OF PERCEPTION, THORNE--FOR A MUSCLE-BOUND CLOD WITH THE BRAIN OF A CHIMPANZEE!

DONE.

NOW ONLY THE FOOL-HARDY HUMAN TORCH STANDS BETWEEN ME AND MY FINAL GOAL!

CLANK!

IN BUT A MATTER OF HOURS, HE TOO WILL BE ELIMINATED--

--AND THE WORLD WILL BE MINE FOR THE TAKING!

MAYBE YOU'RE FORGETTING ONE THING, DOOM... A MAN DOESN'T HAVE TO BE SUPER-POWERED TO PUT ON A GOOD FIGHT!

YOU'VE STILL GOT TO TAKE CARE OF ME!

YOU? DON'T BE LUDICROUS, THORNE.

I INVITED YOU TO THIS SUPPOSED ALUMNI-MEETING TO HUMILIATE YOU--NOT TO DESTROY YOU.

IS THAT SO?

WELL MAYBE YOU'LL HAVE TO DESTROY ME, DOOM--BECAUSE I WON'T REST TILL I'VE DESTROYED YOU.

YOU ALWAYS WERE AN ANNOYANCE, THORNE...EVEN IN COLLEGE.

VERY WELL. IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT--

--I'LL BE ONLY TOO HAPPY TO OBLIGE!

WOOM!

SAM! SAM!

OH MY LORD... YOU KILLED HIM!

YOU KILLED HIM!

NOT SO, BELLE THORNE... I HAVE ONLY STUNNED YOUR HUSBAND.

EVEN VICTOR VON DOOM WOULD FIND NO HONOR IN SLAYING A HELPLESS FOOL.

NOW CALM YOURSELF, WOMAN.

THERE IS MUCH WE MUST TALK ABOUT, YOU AND I.

I ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO HAVE THIS CONVERSATION WITH BOTH YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND...BUT UNFORTUNATELY, THAT'S NO LONGER POSSIBLE.

DID YOU KNOW THAT HE, REED RICHARDS AND I WERE CLASS-MATES IN COLLEGE?

THAT'S THE PRIMARY REASON YOU WERE SUMMONED HERE...

...SO THAT THOSE MEN I HAVE HATED ALL MY LIFE COULD BE PRESENT AT THE MOMENT OF MY MOST MAGNIFICENT TRIUMPH!

WALLS LIFT WITH A NEAR-SILENT WHIRR... FLOORS SHIFT AND SLANT, FORMING SHALLOW RAMPS... THE ENTIRE REAR OF THE MANHATTAN TOWNHOUSE SUBTLY CHANGES...

...AND THROUGH IT ALL, THERE DRONES THE MASK-MUFFLED VOICE OF THE MADMAN NAMED DOOM.

THIS ENTIRE CITY BLOCK WAS BUILT TO MY SPECIFICATIONS YEARS AGO,

AT THE TIME, I INTENDED IT AS A SECRET REFUGE FROM THE FANTASTIC FOUR...

NOW, IT'S BECOME THE AMERICAN BASE FOR MY WORLD-WIDE PROJECT... SOMETHING I CALL OPERATION: BABEL!

IN A MOMENT, I'LL EXPLAIN THE MEANING OF THAT PHRASE... BUT FIRST, BEHOLD...

...THE HIDDEN FORTRESS OF DOCTOR DOOM!

SAY,.. WHO'S THE LADY, HANDSOME?

CAN'T SEE HER TOO CLEARLY.. BUT SHE LOOKS KINDA FAMILIAR!

HEY! IF THAT'S SUZIE I'LL--

I WUZ WONDERIN' WHEN YA'D GET BACK HERE, DOOMIE.

FOR A WHILE I WAS HOPIN' YA WUZ LOST--BUT YA HAFTA KEEP TURNIN' UP, LIKE A BLASTED BAD PENNY.

SILENCE, YOU BRAINLESS BOOR!

YOUR PRATTLING NO LONGER ENTERTAINS ME. INDEED, YOUR VERY PRESENCE IS A CEASELESS IRRITATION.

CONSIDER YOURSELF FORTUNATE THAT I DON'T REMOVE THAT IRRITATION -- BY CRUSHING YOU LIKE THE FURTIVE INSECT YOU ARE!

PLEASE PARDON THIS OUTBURST, MY DEAR.

I'M AFRAID MR. GRIMM AWAKENS THE WORST IN ME... A RARE OCCURRENCE I PROMISE YOU.

DOCTOR, THE CAPTIVES HAVE BEEN PROCESSED.

DO YOU WISH US TO PLACE THEM IN THE NEUTRO-CHAMBERS, AS PER YOUR PREVIOUS INSTRUCTIONS?

I SEE NO REASON TO *CHANGE* THOSE INSTRUCTIONS, GORT,

PROCEED.

*BUT, AS TWO BURLY TECHNICIANS BEND TO LIFT THE UNCONSCIOUS **EX-LEADER** OF THE FABULOUS FOURSOME...*

WAIT! HE'S AWAKE, DON'T YOU SEE?

HE'S ***AWAKE!***

SO HE ***IS.***

PUT RICHARDS ON HIS ***FEET,*** GORT.

SUE... ***WHERE...?***

NO... IT'S ***NOT*** SUE... IT'S...

YOU! I DON'T KNOW WHAT MAD PLAN YOU'VE CONCEIVED ***THIS*** TIME, DOOM... BUT YOU'LL NEVER ***SUCCEED.***

I SWEAR IT!

YOUR OATH MEANS ***NOTHING*** TO ME, RICHARDS.

YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS ARE COMPLETELY IN MY ***POWER...***

...MORE COMPLETELY THAN YOU'LL EVER ***KNOW.***

FROM THE FIRST, I'VE MANIPULATED THE FOUR OF YOU LIKE ***PUPPETS--***

--AND THE ***EASIEST*** TO MANIPULATE, OF COURSE, WAS THE MINDLESS ***THING!***

*"WHO ELSE BUT **I** COULD HAVE WORKED SUCH A CLEVER **TRAP**-- LURING BEN GRIMM TO A EUROPEAN COUNTRY **BORDERING** LATVERIA BY PROMISING HIS GIRL-FRIEND, **ALICIA**, AN OPERATION THAT WOULD GIVE HER **SIGHT****--

**LAST ISSUE. --RT.*

GO!

*"--AND THEN **TRICKING** HIM INTO BATTLE WITH **DARKOTH**, A LEGENDARY **DEATH-DEMON** WHO HAUNTED THE NEARBY **HILLS.***

"WHO BUT I COULD HAVE USED DARKOTH TO DRAIN THE MIGHTY THING'S STRENGTH--?

"--WEAKENING HIM--

"--TILL FINALLY, IN ONE MASTER STROKE--

--THE THING WAS MINE!

JUST AS YOU ARE NOW MINE, RICHARDS--BECAUSE YOU WERE FOOL ENOUGH TO ATTEND THIS SUPPOSED ALUMNI MEETING--NOT EVEN RECOGNIZING THAT THE ORNAMENTS IN THE HALLS AND DINING ROOM WERE TAKEN FROM THE LATVIAN EMBASSY--

A CLUE I THREW TO YOU, KNOWING YOU'D NEVER TAKE IT.

SO YOU PLAY A GOOD GAME OF CAT-AND-MOUSE.

WHAT'S YOUR REAL REASON FOR CAPTURING US, DOOM?

RICHARDS... I'M TIRED OF WARFARE, OF INTRIGUE AND ADVENTURE.

BY RIGHT, THIS WORLD SHOULD BE MINE TO COMMAND... BUT TIME AND AGAIN, I'VE BEEN DEFEATED BY THE POWER OF MISGUIDED PATRIOTISM.

WITH THIS DEVICE--THE VIBRATION BOMB--I PLAN TO REVERSE MY FORMER FAILURES. WITH IT, I CAN DESTROY THE SUBTLER EMOTIONS OF COYALTY AND PRIDE...

...LIKE A CLOTH CLEANING A BLACKBOARD, THE VIBRATION BOMB ERASES ALL PREVIOUS EMOTIONAL TIES...

...PROVIDING ME WITH A CLEAN SLATE ON WHICH TO WRITE NEW LOYALTY... A LOYALTY ONLY TO ME... TO DOCTOR DOOM!

BUT PERHAPS A DRAMATIC DEMONSTRATION WOULD SAY WHAT WORDS CANNOT.

MY SPIES HAVE DISCOVERED TWO TRAITORS AMONG MY MEN...

THEY WILL PROVIDE THE CLIMACTIC TEST!

GORT! HARRISON! COME HERE!

HE KNOWS! THE MASTER KNOWS WE TRIED TO SELL HIS SECRETS--

HE'LL KILL US! WE MUST ESCAPE-- WE HAVE TO ESCAPE BEFORE--

COWARDLY SCUM!

SSRAK!

YOU SHOULD HAVE REALIZED BEFORE YOU APPROACHED THE SPIES OF MY ENEMIES--

--NO ONE CAN ESCAPE VICTOR VON DOOM.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THEM, DOOM?

PROVE TO YOU THE POWER OF THE VIBRATION DEVICE--

--IN A MANNER THAT WILL LEAVE NO DOUBT AS TO THE SERIOUSNESS OF MY PLAN.

WITHIN EVERY MAN, THERE IS A BRAIN-PATTERN, RICHARDS... A SERIES OF CODES AND SYMBOLS WHICH CREATE THAT DELICATE STRUCTURE WE KNOW AS PERSONALITY.

THE VIBRATION DEVICE--AND THE VIBRATION BOMB--BREAKS DOWN THAT PERSONALITY BY DISSOLVING THE CODES--

--REDUCING THE SUBJECT--OR SUBJECTS--INTO A GIBBERING SHADOW OF A MAN.

WATCH, RICHARDS, WATCH, AND LEARN THE TRUE DEPTH OF MY GENIUS!

I SPENT YEARS DEVELOPING THIS DEVICE.

ITS CREATION REMOVED THE NECESSITY FOR WAR AGAINST THE WORLD--

--FOR, WITH BUT A TURN OF A DIAL--

--I CAN END THE WORLD FOREVER!

RREEEEEEE

BOTH OF THESE TREACHEROUS DOGS ARE NOW *TOTALLY* SUSCEPTIBLE TO INFLUENCE BY A SUPERIOR *BRAIN.*

MY BRAIN.

I AM YOUR *MASTER,* FOOLS--MY WILL IS *YOUR* WILL--

--MY THOUGHTS, *YOUR* THOUGHTS.

YOUR THOUGHTS... *OUR* THOUGHTS...

ARE YOU *LOYAL* TO ME? *ONLY* TO ME?

WE ARE LOYAL TO YOU. *ONLY* TO YOU.

THEN *PROVE* IT YOU SWINE... *SHOOT!* YOUR MASTER *COMMANDS* IT!

GOOD *LORD,* MAN--*NO!*

BUT REED'S PLEA IS IGNORED, HIS HORROR UNNOTICED, AS--

HAHAHA HAHAHA

ON THAT NOTE, LET'S SWITCH SCENES.

AFTER ALL, THERE'RE A FEW OTHER MEMBERS OF THIS FAMOUS QUARTET WE HAVEN'T SEEN YET--

--SUCH AS THE EVER-ANGRY HUMAN TORCH--

--AND HIS OLD SCHOOL BUDDY, WYATT WINGFOOT!

JOHNNY--IN THE NAME OF *SANITY,* STOP IT! *STOP IT!*

I REALIZE HOW *UPSET* YOU ARE WITH REED--HOW *BITTER* YOU FEEL--

--BUT RAGING ALL OVER UPSTATE NEW YORK JUST *ISN'T* GOING TO *HELP!*

BLAST IT, MAN--WILL YOU LISTEN TO *REASON?*

WHY *SHOULD* I LISTEN TO REASON, WINGFOOT?

DID *REED* LISTEN TO REASON-- DID HE EVEN *THINK* ABOUT REASON WHEN HE ZAPPED HIS OWN *KID*?

LOOK OUT!

THAT WAS MY NEPHEW HE PUT INTO A COMA, WYATT -- MY SISTER'S *SON!*

HOW THE HECK AM I *SUPPOSED* TO FEEL WHEN--

WYATT?

GOOD LORD! WYATT!

*QUICKLY, THE HOT-HEADED TEENAGER **FLAMES OFF**, DROPS BESIDE HIS FALLEN FRIEND, AND--*

BUDDY, ARE YOU *OKAY*? I DIDN'T *MEAN* IT--

HONEST, I DIDN'T *WANT* TO--

JUST HAD-- THE *WIND* KNOCKED OUT OF ME--

--BUT ASIDE FROM THAT-- NO BROKEN *BONES*. I'LL LIVE.

WHAT ABOUT *YOU*, JOHNNY... ARE YOU GOING TO DROP ALL THIS, AND *LIVE* AGAIN?

WYATT, SOMETIMES I'M AS DUMB AS THE *HULK*.*

FORGIVE ME?

* WHO JOHNNY JUST MET IN *MARVEL TEAM-UP* #16. -- RT.

CERTAINLY I FORGIVE YOU, JOHNNY.

THE QUESTION IS-- WILL OUR *STATE TROOPER* FRIEND?

AUH?

BLAMED FREAK *SUPER-HEROES!*

MAYBE IN NEW YORK CITY THEY PUT *UP* WITH YOUR KIND--

--BUT THAT DOESN'T CARRY A BIT OF WEIGHT IN *BUFFALO*, BOY.

YOU'RE *UNDER ARREST* FOR DAMAGING *PUBLIC PROPERTY!*

BOTH OF YOU!

WHOOPS!

ELSEWHERE IN THE MARVEL TIME CONTINUUM, A DISTRAUGHT SUE RICHARDS STARES AT HER COMATOSE CHILD--

--AND WONDERS--

--IS HER LIFE LEFT WITH ANY MEANING, WITH FRANKLIN THIS WAY?

SUE, I KNOW YOU'VE HAD A SHOCK--BUT YOU'VE GOT TO COME OUT OF IT.

YOU CAN'T HIDE IN PENNSYLVANIA FOREVER!

I REALIZE THAT, CAROL...

...BUT WHAT CAN I DO?

ALWAYS BEFORE I THOUGHT I COULD TURN TO REED--

--BUT AFTER THIS,* AFTER WHAT HE'S DONE--THERE'S NO ONE I CAN GO TO--

--NO ONE I CAN TRUST--

NO ONE!

*SEE FF #141, --RT.

ENOUGH CATCHING-UP.

WE'VE GOT A VILLAIN TO WATCH--AND SO LET'S DO IT--

--HERE IN THE LAUNCH SILO WHERE THE VIBRO-BOMB IS BEING ATTACHED TO A MISSILE--

--THE ENTIRE OPERATION OVERSEEN BY--

--THE WORLD'S ONLY SURVIVING ABSOLUTE MONARCH--THE VERITABLE KING OF LATVERIA!

CLICK. REPORT/REPORT. CLICK.

WHAT IS IT, MONITOR?

CLICK. DISTURBANCE/ CORE CONTROL CHAMBER 12. CLICK.

CLICK. REPEAT: DISTURBANCE/ CORE CONTROL CHAMBER 12. CLICK.

NO DOUBT MY GUESTS ARE ATTEMPTING TO ESCAPE.

THE IMBECILIC WITLINGS. DON'T THEY COMPREHEND THE DEPTH OF MY PLAN?

ONCE THE VIBRO-BOMB IS IN ORBIT AROUND THE EARTH, I CAN DETONATE IT AT WILL--AND THE RESULTING RADIATION WILL DESTROY THE PERSONALITIES OF EVERY THINKING CREATURE ON THIS PLANET.

EXCLUDING MYSELF, OF COURSE--AND A FEW SELECT AIDES.

THUS, AFTER TODAY, THERE CAN BE NO ESCAPE FROM DOOM--

THE EARTH WILL BE MINE!

SINCE MY YOUTH, I'VE KNOWN MY **DESTINY**... I'VE KNOWN THAT I WAS BORN TO **RULE**, AS NO MAN OR KING HAS RULED **BEFORE**.

CAESAR, CHARLEMAGNE, NAPOLEAN... THEY ARE **CHILDREN** COMPARED TO ME, FOR MINE IS A VISION THAT **SURPASSES** THEIR OWN...

...A DREAM WHICH **DWARFS** THEIR GREATEST **DELUSIONS!**

EVERY MAN, EVERY WOMAN, EVERY CHILD WILL **BOW** TO VICTOR VON DOOM BEFORE THIS WEEK IS OUT--

--THEY WILL **GROVEL** AT HIS FEET--

--THE FEET OF A GYPSY'S **SON!**

MY NAME WILL BE ON EVERY TONGUE--

DOOM DOOM DOOM

--AND LIKE NO LEADER **BEFORE** ME, I WILL COMMAND ABSOLUTE **LOYALTY**--

--AND IT WILL BE **GIVEN** ME, FOR IS IT NOT, AFTER ALL-- MY KINGLY **DUE?**

*PERHAPS THERE **IS** A TINGE OF MADNESS IN THIS MONARCH'S VOICE... BUT ALSO, THERE'S A NOTE OF **GENIUS**...*

COMPUTERS & CONTROL ROOMS

DOOM

...AND IT **ECHOES** IN THE HALLS OF DOOM'S HIDDEN FORTRESS...

ELEVATOR SHAFT

THING & DARKOTH HERE

DUMMY FLOORS

ROOM WHERE REED & MEDUSA TRAPPED

POWER SOURCE

SHOCK WALL (ABSORBS VIBRATIONS)

MISSLE ROOM (VIBRO BOMB)

LAUNCH PAD

*...AND **FOLLOWS** HIM TO ONE **FINAL** HALL, WHERE...*

WHAT IS THE **MEANING** OF THIS?

MASTER-- THE **DEATH-DEMON**--!

HE'S **BROKEN FREE!**

YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS WITH YOUR **LIVES**, YOU INCOMPETENT **SLUGS!**

IF EVEN **ONE** OF MY DEVICES IS-- **INCREDIBLE!**

BACK, FOUL MINIONS OF TREACHERY! BACK--OR THE DEATH YOU FIND WILL BE YOUR OWN!

DARKOTH IS CAGED BY NO ONE-- AND HE ANSWERS TO NO ONE BUT HIS MASTER!

BRAK!

NOW LEAVE ME-- --OR DIE!

STOP! STOP THIS INSANITY AT ONCE!

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE! HE CLIMBS LIKE AN ANIMAL-- HAS THE STRENGTH OF TWENTY MEN!

DESTROY HIM-- BEFORE HE DESTROYS US ALL!

YOUR MASTER COMMANDS IT--I SAY, STOP!!

MASTER? YOU--WHO SUMMONED ME FROM THE DEPTHS-- WAS IT YOU WHO CAGED ME?

OF COURSE, DOLT.

PUT THAT MAN DOWN-- AND LET ME SPEAK TO YOU.

FORGIVE ME, MASTER... I DID NOT UNDERSTAND.

AS HE WHOSE SPELL BROUGHT ME FROM THE DARKNESS OF THE UNDERWORLD-- YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO RESTRAIN ME.

I DIDN'T--

UNTHINKING CLOD!

I AM MORE THAN YOUR MASTER, I AM YOUR CREATOR!

EVERYTHING YOU ARE AND PRETEND TO BE-- YOU ARE BECAUSE I HAVE WILLED IT SO. AFTER ALL THESE MONTHS, YOU STILL HAVEN'T GUESSED--

--BUT NOW, AT LAST, YOU MAY BE TOLD THE TRUTH-- ABOUT THE DEATH-DEMON CALLED DARKOTH!

A SHORT TIME LATER,* A MIGHTY ROAR ECHOES THROUGH THE TWILIGHT SKY OF MANHATTAN, AS A SLEEK JET LUNGES FROM A CONCEALED HANGER--

BAROOM!

--AND THE MONARCH OF LATVERIA LIFTS SKYWARD ON YET ANOTHER QUEST!

*DON'T YOU JUST LOVE THE WAY WE SKIM OVER REVELATIONS, TO KEEP YOU GUESSING?
--GERRY, RICH & ROY.

THE MASTER IS PLEASED... HE LOOKS FORWARD TO THIS NEW ENGAGEMENT, WITH THE ADOLESCENT ADVENTURER CALLED THE TORCH.

BUT WHY IS HE WITH US? WHAT TROUBLE CAN A BOY BE?

THE HUMAN TORCH IS HARDLY A BOY, KARL--

"--AND AS FOR WHAT TROUBLE HE CAN BE--MY FRIEND, PRAY WE NEVER KNOW!"

SO THIS IS WHAT THE INSIDE OF A JAIL LOOKS LIKE, JOHNNY.

I MUST SAY-- TRAVELING WITH YOU IS AN EDUCATION.

IF YOUR GRAND-FATHER COULD SEE YOU NOW, HE'D HAVE A CANARY, WYATT.

:SNIFF: DID I LEAVE THE COFFEE HEATER ON? SMELLS LIKE SOMETHING'S BURNING...!

FRANKLY, WYATT, THIS KIND OF THING IS PRETTY *GOOD* FOR YOU. GIVES YOU A SENSE OF *HERITAGE*, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I--

HEY!

THE WALL, JOHNNY!

IN THE NAME OF MY ANCESTORS -- WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THE WALL?

BAROOM!

EEEYOOOW!

QUICKLY, MAN, BEFORE THEY CAN RECOVER-- *ATTACK!*

THE AGENT WHO *CAPTURES* THEM RECEIVES A TEN-CREDIT *BONUS*.

MOVE, BLAST YOU-- MOVE!

JOHNNY... CONCERNING THAT *EDUCATION* I MENTIONED...

...MUST IT *ALWAYS* INCLUDE *VIOLENCE?*

BUDDY, I DON'T *PICK* MY ENEMIES-- THEY PICK *ME*.

WHAT BUGS ME *NOW* IS WHO WANTS ME BAD ENOUGH TO--

HOLY COW! IT'S DOC DOOM!

I ADVISE YOU, STORM--COME *QUIETLY*.

I HAVE NEITHER THE TIME NOR THE *DESIRE* FOR GAMING.

I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT, DOC-- AND I WISH I COULD HELP.

BUT YOU SEE-- I DON'T LIKE BEING GRABBED BY A BUNCH OF GOONS--

IT MAKES ME MAD-- AND WHEN I'M MAD, I KINDA LOSE MY TEMPER-- AND THAT'S WHEN I--

FLAME ON!

DO YOU THINK HE'S TRYING TO TELL US SOMETHING, MY FRIENDS?

PERHAPS HE'S TELLING US--THIS!

THAT'S THE STUFF, WYATT. DON'T LET THEM PUT YOU DOWN.

THESE BOYS AREN'T SO TOUGH--ARE YA, FELLA?

SPRAK!

JOHNNY, WHAT ABOUT DOOM? HE SEEMS TO BE JUST STANDING THERE... WATCHING US AS THOUGH WE WERE CHILDREN.

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT HIS EYES... HE KNOWS HE CAN'T BE DEFEATED... HE KNOWS--

FRAK!

UNNNH!

NO! IF YOU'VE HURT HIM, DOOM-- I SWEAR I'LL--

MMMMNNNPH!

THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO, STORM!

FOOM!

THIS GAME IS OVER.. NOW!

MEANWHILE, IN THE CENTRAL CORE CHAMBER OF DOOM'S UNDERGROUND **FORTRESS**...

GUARDS, YOU MAY **LEAVE** THE MASTER HAS GIVEN THIS DUTY TO **ME.**

LEAVE.

MEDUSA, WATCH HIM **CLOSELY.** I'M NOT CERTAIN WHAT WE SHOULD EXPECT FROM DARKOTH--

--THOUGH I **AM** CERTAIN IT WON'T BE **PLEASANT.**

BUT, REED-- HE'S **RELEASING** US! WHY--?

BECAUSE I NEED YOUR **HELP,** WOMAN... THE HELP OF **ALL** OF YOU.

I HAVE BEEN **WRONGED**-- AND I WISH **REVENGE.**

PERHAPS YOU'D BETTER **EXPLAIN,** DARKOTH.

QUICKLY THEN... **LISTEN:**

AMONG THE LEGENDS OF A SMALL BALKAN COUNTRY, THERE IS THE MYTH OF **DARKOTH, THE DEATH-DEMON...** WHO MAY BE **SUMMONED** BY A MASTER OF MYSTICISM, AND USED TO **CRUSH** THE CONJURER'S **ENEMIES.**

THREE WEEKS AGO, I BECAME **CONSCIOUS**-- AND I BELIEVED MYSELF TO **BE** DARKOTH, THE **LIVING** DEATH-DEMON OF LEGEND. THE MAN CALLED DOOM PORTRAYED HIMSELF AS MY **MASTER**-- AND BECAUSE HIS WAS THE **FIRST** FACE I SAW, I BELIEVED HIM.

I WAS **WRONG.**

DOOM REVEALED TO ME THE **TRUTH**--THAT I AM BUT ONE OF HIS FORMER **AIDES,** CONVERTED THROUGH CHEMISTRY AND THE WORK OF THE **VIBRATION DEVICE**--INTO THIS **MOCKERY** YOU SEE BEFORE YOU.

BUT I KNOW **OTHERWISE.** FOR BETTER OR WORSE, REAL OR **FALSE**... I **AM** DARKOTH...

...AND DOOM MUST **PAY** FOR THE INDIGNITY HE HAS FOSTERED **UPON** ME!

AND YOU WANT OUR **HELP?**

VERY WELL, DARKOTH... YOU **HAVE** IT,

THEN LET US **HURRY.** DOOM WILL RETURN WITHIN THE **HOUR.**

YA THINK WE CAN **TRUST** THAT CREEP, STRETCH?

WE HAVEN'T MUCH **CHOICE,** OLD FRIEND. DOOM **STILL** HAS ALICIA AND THE THORNES--

--AND LORD ONLY **KNOWS** WHAT'LL HAPPEN IF HE EXPLODES THE **VIBRATION BOMB!**

I JUST **PRAY** WE'LL BE ABLE TO **STOP** HIM...

...AND I THINK... YES, I BELIEVE I KNOW **HOW!**

NEXT ISSUE **THE BATTLE FOR NEW YORK!**

FANTASTIC FOUR

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

FANTASTIC FOUR

WHEN STRIKES THE SINISTER SEEKER!

THIS IS IT !! THE FINAL SHOWDOWN WITH DR. DOOM!

BUCKLER SINNOTT

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

GERRY CONWAY * RICH BUCKLER
WRITER ARTIST

JOE SINNOTT * ARTIE SIMEK, LETTERER
INKER G. ROUSSOS, COLORIST

ROY THOMAS, EDITOR

ATTACK!

ANCHOR ME, BEN--I'VE GOT TO TRY TO MAKE A BRIDGE ACROSS THIS GAP FOR YOU THREE TO CROSS ON!

THIS IS THE ONLY WAY WE CAN REACH THE BAXTER BUILDING WITHOUT ONE OF DOCTOR DOOM'S LACKEYS SPOTTING US--! I'VE GOT TO MAKE IT--

I'VE GOT TO!

TWO ISSUES AGO, THE THING FOLLOWED HIS GIRL, **ALICIA,** TO A SMALL BALKAN COUNTRY WHERE SHE'D BEEN PROMISED AN OPERATION TO REGAIN HER **SIGHT.** ONCE IN THAT BALKAN COUNTRY, BEN GRIMM WAS ATTACKED AGAIN AND AGAIN BY **DARKOTH**--THE CYBORG **DEATH-DEMON**--WHO WAS FINALLY REVEALED TO BE AN AGENT OF **DOCTOR DOOM!** DEFEATED BY TRICKERY, THE THING LEARNED **TOO LATE** THAT BOTH HE AND ALICIA HAD BEEN **DUPED**--SEPARATED FROM THE **REST** OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR IN ORDER THAT THE THING BE MORE **EASILY BEATEN!**

ONE ISSUE AGO, DOCTOR DOOM REVEALED HIS **ULTIMATE DESIGN**--A PLAN TO CRUSH THE WILL OF THE EARTH'S ENTIRE **POPULATION** BY MEANS OF A DEVICE CALLED **THE VIBRO-BOMB!** ALL SEEMED **BLACK**--UNTIL DARKOTH, ENRAGED BY THE THOUGHT OF BEING DOOM'S **PAWN,** REBELLED AND **FREED** THE CAPTURED FANTASTIC FOUR--AND NOW HE **AIDS** THEM IN THEIR ESCAPE FROM THE TOWN-HOUSE **FORTRESS** OF **DOCTOR VICTOR VON DOOM!**

DON'T **CROWD** ME, DARKOTH--I STILL AINT FERGOT THAT **BRUISIN'** YA GAVE ME BACK IN **LATVERIA!**

ONE STEP OUTTA LINE, AND **POW**--YOU'VE **HAD** IT!

I PROPOSE WE DISCUSS THE MATTER **LATER,** BENJAMIN GRIMM.

FOR THE MOMENT, WE'LL BE WELL **OCCUPIED** FINDING OUR WAY THROUGH THESE SUBTERRANEAN **SEWERS**--

--IF WE EVER **DO!**

APOLOGIA: YEAH, WE **KNOW** MEDUSA WAS IN HER STREET CLOTHES WHEN SHE AND REED WERE CAPTURED BY DOC DOOM--SO WOULDJA BELIEVE SHE HAD HER BOOTS AND GLOVES TUCKED IN HER **HAIR...?** COMPRESSED IN A SECRET **RING COMPARTMENT...?** WOULDJA BELIEVE WE **GOOFED?**
--ROY.

DARKOTH IS *RIGHT,* BEN. COULD IT BE WE'RE *LOST?*

LOST? THAT'S JUST *TERRIFIC*...THAT'S ALL WE *NEED!*

SOMEWHERE UP THERE, DOOM'S TRYIN' TA MAKE *MIND-SLAVES* OUTTA THE WHOLE BLAMED *WORLD*--

--WHILE *WE* GO WANDERIN' AROUND IN OLD ABANDONED *TUNNELS*-- SNEAKIN' BACK TO OUR HEADQUARTERS LIKE *WE* WUZ THE BAD GUYS!

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE *REST* OF YA--

--BUT ME, I'VE HAD IT UP TA *HERE!* AND WHEN *THAT* HAPPENS, I GET *MAD*--AND WHEN I GET MAD--

I HIT THINGS!

SWUMP

YEEEOOW!

LISTEN...WAKE ME WHEN IT'S *OVER,* OKAY?

WHEN A JOKER LIKE ME GOES AROUND PUTTIN' HIS FIST THROUGH *WATER-PIPES*--YA KNOW HE'S GOIN' *CRACKERS.*

SO IF IT'S ALL THE SAME WITH *YOU*-- COUNT ME *OUTTA* THIS BLASTED *FIASCO!*

BEN, WE *KNOW* HOW MUCH OF A STRAIN *ALICIA'S CAPTURE* HAS PUT ON YOU-- BUT YOU *CAN'T* QUIT NOW.

WE NEED YOUR STRENGTH-- YOUR *COURAGE.* OLD FRIEND, WE CAN'T FACE THIS MENACE *WITHOUT* YOU.

NUTS!

THE WORLD'S IN PRETTY CRUMMY *SHAPE* WHEN A GUY CAN'T EVEN *GIVE UP* IN PEACE.

OKAY, STRETCH-- YA WANT ME, YA *GOT* ME.

I HOPE YA *CHOKE!*

HUH.? *NOW* WHAT.?

I TOLD YA I'D *COME* WITH YA, RICHARDS...WHAT MORE DO YA *NEED.?*

A LOUSY *CONTRACT* ?

NO, BEN--I NEED *YOU.* I NEED YOUR HELP, YOUR *COMPLETE* HELP--

--NOT YOUR *BITTER-NESS.* NOT YOUR *CYNICISM.*

I NEED *YOU...* BENJAMIN GRIMM...

YEAH... ME...THE *THING.*

BLAST IT, BEN-- *LISTEN TO ME!*

I'M TRYING TO GET IT THROUGH THAT THICK *SKULL* OF YOURS-- WE CAN'T *MAKE IT* WITHOUT--

CRUMP!

WHAT--?

BEN--MEDUSA-- *GET BACK!* THERE'S SOME-THING *UP THERE--*

--SOME-THING COMING THROUGH THAT *WALL!*

WHAT IN SAM HILL D'YA CALL *THAT?*

KRAASH!

I--AM-- CALLED-- *THE SEEKER.*

I--HAVE-- BEEN--SENT --TO--MAKE --YOU *DIE!*

SWANG!

SO DO **WE**, BEN! THIS **SEEKER** CREATURE MUST BE ONE OF DOCTOR DOOM'S **ANDROIDS**--

SOMEHOW IT'S MANAGED TO **TRACE** US HERE--

UNNNHH! **WATCH IT,** STRETCHO-- THIS GUY PLAYS FER **KEEPS!**

--BUT THAT'S **ALL!**

YOU--ARE--THE--HUMAN--CALLED--**MR. FANTASTIC.**

I--HAVE--BEEN--**PROGRAMMED**--TO--**DEFEAT**--YOU.

YOU'LL FIND THAT **DIFFICULT,** FRIEND--

--WITH YOUR **ARMS BOUND!**

CORRECTION: THESE--ARE--NOT--**ARMS**--

--THEY--ARE--NUCLEAR--**DISCHARGER PRODS!**

SSZZACKK!

MMNNNHHH!

ENOUGH, SEEKER-- YOU HUNT **DARKOTH,** NOT THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

YOUR SENSORS ARE ATTUNED TO **MY** BODILY VIBRATIONS--SO IT IS **I** YOU MUST BATTLE, NOT **THEM!**

NOT--TRUE. I--MUST--RETURN--WITH--**ALL**--

--OR--FALL--VICTIM--TO--THE--MASTER'S **DISPLEASURE.**

THEN YOU'RE IN FOR A **TONGUE-LASHING,** "SEEKER"--

--BECAUSE YOU'RE JUST NOT *STRONG* ENOUGH--

FRAK

--TO DESTROY *THE FANTASTIC FOUR!*

THAT'S *SHOWIN'* HIM, MEDUSA. YOU JUST KEEP HIM A LITTLE *OFF-BALANCE*--

AND LADY, I'LL DO THE REST!

BRAKA

BOOM!!

WELL WHADDAYA *KNOW!*

I DIDN'T EVEN GET A CHANCE TA SAY-- "IT'S *CLOBBERIN'* TIME!"

SPLASH!

SO WHADDAYA *WAITIN'* FOR, REED? LET'S *DEMOLISH* THIS CREEP AN' GET *MOVIN'*.

NO, BEN... I THINK WE MAY HAVE A *USE* FOR THE "SEEKER."

I WANT TO BRING HIM TO THE *BAXTER BUILDING* ...TO MY *LAB*...

...BECAUSE IT'S POSSIBLE HE MAY PROVIDE A WAY TO DEFEAT DOOM...

...IF THERE IS A WAY...

...IF WE CAN FIND IT IN TIME...!

YOU LOST THEM? IDIOT! I SHOULD HAVE YOU KILLED FOR THIS!

MONITORING THE SEEKER WAS YOUR RESPONSI-BILITY.

PAK!

IF HE'S VANISHED ON OUR SCREENS-- IT'S YOUR FAULT!

WHY AM I FOREVER SURROUNDED BY INCOM-PETENTS? IS THERE NO ONE I CAN TRUST--

--NO ONE WITH WHOM I CAN SHARE THE GREATNESS-- THE GLORY OF MY MASTER PLAN?

GET OUT, YOU FOOLS--GET OUT, BEFORE I CRUSH YOU ALL!

TROUBLE, VON DOOM?

THINGS AREN'T GOING THE WAY YOU WANT THEM TO--IS THAT IT?

I ASSURE YOU, COACH THORNE--THIS SETBACK IS ONLY TEMPORARY.

NO ONE CAN STAND IN THE WAY OF MY VICTORY, DO YOU HEAR--NO ONE!

THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE **WRONG,** VON DOOM.

WE STAND IN YOUR WAY--NOW, AND **FOREVER.**

WHAT WYATT SAID GOES **DOUBLE** FOR ME, MISTER.

YOU MADE YOUR **BIGGEST** MISTAKE WHEN YOU CROSSED **THE HUMAN TORCH!**

SO? THEN WHY IS IT THAT **YOU** AND **WYATT WINGFOOT** ARE THE ONES IN THE **CAGE,** JOHNNY STORM?

LIKE **ALL** YOUR KIND, YOU POSE AND **BLUSTER--**

--BUT IN THE END, IT IS VICTOR VON DOOM WHO WILL **WIN!**

YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR **MIND,** DOOM... COMPLETELY **INSANE!**

INSANE? IS IT INSANITY TO RECOGNIZE ONE'S **DESTINY?** IS IT MADNESS TO SEEK ONE'S RIGHTFUL **PLACE?**

I THINK **NOT,** THORNE... RATHER, **YOU** ARE THE MADMAN...

...FOR ONLY A MADMAN REFUSES TO ACCEPT **REALITY.** AND THORNE, MY GENIUS IS REAL... **VERY** REAL.

JOHNNY, TRY YOUR **FLAME** AGAIN! MAYBE THE EFFECTS OF DOOM'S **STUN GUN** HAVE WORN OFF!

MAYBE YOU CAN **FLAME ON!**

I'M **TRYING,** WYATT-- BUT IT'S **NO GOOD!**

DOOM'S PUT SOME SORT OF **GAS** INTO THIS TUBE.

SOMEHOW, IT **INHIBITS** MY FLAME. NO MATTER HOW MUCH I **CONCENTRATE--**

--NOTHING HAPPENS! NOTHING!

DO YOU **SEE,** THORNE? TO DEFY ME IS **USELESS!** FOR, IN THE END, DOOM **WILL** SUCCEED-- AND NOT **YOU,** NOT YOUR **WIFE--** NOR ALICIA MASTERS' BELOVED **BEN GRIMM--** CAN DO ANYTHING TO **STOP** ME!

OMINOUS WORDS...

...WORDS WE'LL HAVE TO CONSIDER IN DEPTH, AS WE TURN OUR EYES TO A DARKENED SUB-BASEMENT OF THE WORLD-FAMOUS BAXTER BUILDING, WHERE WE FIND A NON-DESCRIPT JANITOR...

...A MAN ON A COLLISION COURSE WITH DESTINY.

EVERY DAY, THE SAME GRIND: SWEEP OUT THE BOILER ROOM, WASH DOWN THE LOADING DOCKS, FIX THIS, FIX THAT...

MAKES ME WONDER WHY I EVER WENT TO COLLEGE.

SURE, MAYBE IT WASN'T THE BRIGHTEST IDEA IN THE WORLD TO MAJOR IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION--BUT IT WAS EASY.

NOT LIKE THOSE OTHER COURSES--PHILOSOPHY,--CALCULUS--UGH.

HOW WAS I TO KNOW THREE ZILLION OTHER GUYS HAD THE SAME IDEA?

HERE I THOUGHT I'D GET A CUSHY JOB IN SOME HIGH SCHOOL, BEING A GYM TEACHER--

--AND INSTEAD OF THAT, I'M PUSHING A BROOM IN SOMEBODY'S BASEMENT.

AH, WELL... IT'S A LIVING.

AND WHEN YOU THINK OF SOME OF THE OTHER JOBS AROUND, CLEANING A WATER PUMP ISN'T--

HUH?

HEY!

SHADDUP, PAL.

ONE PEEP OUTTA YOU, AND YA WON'T WAKE UP FER A WEEK.

PUT HIM DOWN, BEN. WE HAVEN'T TIME FOR JOKING.

SO WHO'S JOKING?

CAREFUL, RICHARDS... THE SEEKER IS ONLY STUNNED.

ONE JAR COULD WAKE HIM BEFORE WE'VE BROUGHT HIM UPSTAIRS.

BEN, WILL YOU PUT THAT MAN *DOWN?* HE'S JUST THE BUILDING JANITOR.

YEAH? HOW DO WE KNOW HE AINT ON DOOM'S *PAYROLL?*

IF HE'S SO *INNOCENT*--HOWCUM HE WAS SNEAKIN' AROUND *OUTSIDE?*

HE WAS PROBABLY DOING HIS *JOB,* BEN--WHICH IS WHAT *WE* SHOULD BE DOING.

UNDERSTAND?

OKAY, HAVE IT *YOUR* WAY.

MAYBE I *AM* A LITTLE EDGY--BUT WHO WANTS TA TAKE *CHANCES?*

YOU--YOU'RE THE *THING,* AREN'T YOU?

I'VE SEEN YOU ON *TELEVISION!*

ONE'A MY *PUBLIC,* HUH?

LISTEN, BUDDY--COULD BE I WAS A BIT *HARD* ON YA BACK THERE. BEIN' THE IDOL OF MILLIONS GETS ON A GUY'S *NERVES,* Y'KNOW?

SO HOWABOUT I GIVE YA A *SOUVINEER?* SUMTHIN' TA REMEMBER YER LITTLE *ADVENTURE* WITH?

IT AINT *EVERY-BODY* WHO GETS ONE'A *THESE.*

B-B-B-B-BUT--

DON'T BOTHER *THANKIN'* ME, PAL--

I'LL AUTOGRAPH IT *LATER.*

THREE SECONDS, AND COUNTING: SEVERAL BLOCKS EAST OF THE BAXTER BUILDING--

TWO SECONDS, AND COUNTING: THE FATED MOMENT APPROACHES--

ONE SECOND, COUNTING: AND A GRATING COMMAND IS GIVEN--

--NOW.

FIRE!

ZERO HOUR PLUS ONE SECOND: THE EARTH TREMBLES, THE CITY SHAKES... AND FOR ONE AGONIZING INSTANT, THE **SUN** SEEMS TO TOUCH NEW YORK.

ONE SECOND, TWO: AND A FLASHING SILVER NEEDLE STREAKS **SPACEWARD** --BEARING IN ITS HOLD A SINISTER **WEAPON**--CARRYING WITH THAT WEAPON, THE HOPES AND DREAMS OF A **MADMAN**--

--THE DREAMS OF **CONQUEST** OF **VICTOR VON DOOM!**

KRROOM!

HEY, STRETCH-- I HATE TA RUIN YER **DAY**--

--BUT I THINK WE **BLEW** IT.

WHAT DO YOU **MEAN,** BENJAMIN GRIMM?

I WASN'T TALKIN' TA **YOU**--BUT SINCE YA ASK, IT LOOKS LIKE YER PAL DOOM'S GONNA WIN **AFTER ALL.**

HE JUST BLASTED OFF THAT **VIBRO-BOMB** GIZMO OF HIS.

WE'VE **HAD** IT.

PERHAPS **NOT,** BEN... IF I CAN FINISH WORKING ON THIS ANDROID IN **TIME.**

DARKOTH--WE'RE GOING TO NEED YOUR **HELP.**

HIS HELP? HAVE YOU GONE **NUTS?**

FIVE'LL GET YA **TEN** THIS DARKOTH BOZO'S BEEN ON DOOM'S SIDE ALL **ALONG.** MATTER OF FACT, I'M GONNA--

SWAT-T-T!

ENOUGH. YOU WILL BE **SILENT**-- OR **ELSE!**

OR ELSE WHAT, LIZARD-LEGS?

WHEN I GET THROUGH WITH YA--

--YOU AINT GONNA BE ABLE TA LIFT YER PINKY, NEVER-MIND THAT BLASTED TAIL!

I HAVE BEEN PATIENT WITH YOU, BENJAMIN GRIMM--BUT EVEN A CYBORG'S PATIENCE HAS ITS LIMIT!

SWAK!

YOU HAVE INSULTED ME--ATTACKED ME--AND THROUGH IT ALL, I HAVE HELD MY TEMPER--

--BUT YOU HAVE SPOKEN ONCE TOO OFTEN--

THUNK!

--AND I WILL HOLD IT NO MORE!

CHOOM!

DARKOTH--BEN--STOP IT! WE CAN'T WASTE TIME ON PETTY FEUDS--NOT NOW, NOT WITH DOOM PLOTTING AGAINST EVERY MAN AND WOMAN ON EARTH.

PLEASE, BEN--FIGHTING DARKOTH WON'T SAVE ALICIA--AND THAT'S WHAT COUNTS. WE BOTH KNOW THAT.

LET GO OF ME, STRETCH--OR YER NEXT.

BLAST IT, GRIMM--I'M TALKING TO YOU!

THAT'S THE SECOND TIME I'VE HAD TO SHOUT AT YOU TODAY, MISTER--THE SECOND AND LAST TIME.

YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A CHILD--AND I'VE PUT UP WITH ABOUT AS MUCH OF IT AS I'LL TAKE.

HAVE I MADE MYSELF CLEAR?

OKAY, OKAY...LET'S JUST GET MOVIN', OKAY? I'M SICK OF THIS CRUMMY WAITING.

AS ARE WE ALL, BEN. AS ARE WE ALL.

AT THAT MOMENT, 2200 MILES ABOVE THE EARTH--

--AN ELECTRIC IMPULSE MOVES ALONG PRINTED CIRCUITS--

--THE FINAL STAGE IS FREED--

--THE VIBRO BOMB EXPLODES ITS FIRST WAVEFRONT OF ENERGY ACROSS THE SURFACE OF THE PLANET BELOW--

--AND THE CONQUEST OF MANKIND BEGINS!

ACROSS THE WORLD, PEOPLE ARE STRUCK BY THE STRANGE RADIATION--THEIR EYES GO BLANK--THEIR MINDS DRAIN OF THOUGHT--

--AND THEIR BRAINS ARE READIED FOR THE CONTROLLING VOICE OF DR. DOOM.

IN BUT TWO HOURS THE WORLD WILL BE MINE FOR THE TAKING.

MY PERSONALITY--MY WILL--MY MIND--ALL HUMANKIND WILL BE BUT AN EXTENSION OF MY EGO--

--AND TOGETHER, BODY AND BRAIN, WE WILL BECOME A FORCE POWERFUL ENOUGH TO RULE THE COSMOS!

NEVER HAS THERE BEEN A CONCEPT MORE GRAND--

NEVER, A FATE MORE FITTING.

TWO HOURS; YET, AN HOUR LATER, SOMETHING HAPPENS WHICH WILL DESTROY ALL OF DOOM'S DREAMS...A SHADOWED FIGURE APPROACHES THROUGH DARKENED CORRIDORS, UNNOTICED BY A SECURITY SYSTEM PROGRAMMED TO NOTICE ONLY THE UNFAMILIAR...

KRASH!

...PROGRAMMED ONLY TO REACT, NOT TO THINK.

JOHNNY, LOOK OUT--!

SILENTLY, THE SEEKER FREES BOTH WYATT WINGFOOT AND JOHNNY STORM...THEN **STEPS ASIDE** AS THE TWO YOUTHS RUSH **PAST**, TOWARD THE CONTROL ROOM AND--

DOOM! YOU'RE IN FOR IT **NOW**, BUSTER --AND **HOW!**

I DON'T KNOW **WHO** THAT SCALY-SKINNED CHARACTER IS WHO LET ME OUT--AND I DON'T **CARE.**

ANOTHER FEW SECONDS, AND THE LAST OF THAT **GAS** WILL WEAR OFF--AND THEN IT'S--

FLAME ON!

WATCH OUT, WORLD--

THE **HUMAN TORCH** IS BACK IN TOWN!

FOOSH!

HEY, DOOM--IF YOU'LL EXCUSE THE *PUN*, HOW DOES IT FEEL TO SEE YOUR PLANS GO UP IN *SMOKE*?

NO *ANSWER*, HUH? I *THOUGHT* SO.

ZAT!

SHOOT HIM, YOU IMBECILES!

SHOOT HIM!

THEY CAN *TRY*, DOOM--BUT IT WON'T *WORK*. I'M BUILDING UP A *HEAT SHIELD* AROUND MY BODY--

NOTHING CAN TOUCH ME NOW SHORT OF AN *ATOMIC BLAST!*

CAN'T KEEP IT UP *LONG*, BUT I'LL KEEP IT *LONG ENOUGH* TO STOP--

YEEEOOOW!

SPATCH!

FOOLISH *CHILD!*

WHAT USE IS A SHIELD OF *HEAT*--WHEN DOOM CAN CREATE A *CONCUSSION VACUUM* TO ABSORB YOUR PITIABLE *FLAME?*

TO BE FAIR, YOUR EFFORT WAS A *VALIANT* ONE--BUT *FUTILE*.

NONE CAN DEFEAT DOOM, NOT *NOW*--NOT WHEN I'M SO *CLOSE*--EH?

YOU! SEEKER! YOU *BETRAYED* ME! WELL, MY ANDROID FRIEND--SEE WHAT REWARD IS DUE *TRAITORS* WHO--

SPAK!

YES, DOCTOR? YOU WERE *SAYING...?*

PERHAPS YOU REALIZE YOUR ERROR--*THAT HE WHO BETRAYED YOU WAS NOT THE MINDLESS SEEKER--*

--BUT DARKOTH, WHO SEEKS REVENGE!

WHOA, MISTER-- SLOW DOWN!

YA GOTTA LEAVE SOME FUN FER OL' BENJY, TOO, Y'KNOW.

KRAAK!

WHAT'S THE STORY, WYATT? IS TORCHY GONNA BE OKAY?

LOOKS THAT WAY, THING.

GREAT. THEN MAYBE IT'S TIME ME AN' DOOM HAD A LITTLE TALK!

THE THING IS LIABLE TO FIND THAT A BIT DIFFICULT--FOR, EVEN AS STONE AND MORTAR FALLS AROUND OUR RAMPAGING HERO, THE VILLAIN OF THIS PIECE IS MAKING HIS ESCAPE--

--NOT UNOBSERVED, WE MIGHT ADD, BY A PAIR OF BURNING EYES.

THIS IS, AT THE WORST, A MINOR SETBACK.

IF I CAN REACH MY CENTRAL CONTROL-- I MAY STILL SAVE THE DAY.

SECONDS LATER, IN A SHADOWY ROOM LIT ONLY BY THE GLOW OF A THOUSAND SMALL DIALS...

THE IDIOTS THINK THEY'VE DEFEATED ME--BUT THEY'VE FORGOTTEN ONE THING:

THE VIBRO-BOMB IS STILL IN ORBIT OVER THE EARTH!

I HAVE ONLY TO JOIN IT IN ITS ORBIT--AND ACTIVATE ITS FULL BEAM--AND WITHIN THE HOUR, DESPITE THE FANTASTIC FOUR--

THE WORLD WILL BE MINE!

RRRUMMMMBLE!

MR. GRIMM-- THE ENTIRE BUILDING'S SHAKING!

WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S HAPPENING?

YA GOT ME, WYATT--BUT I'VE GOT A SNEAKIN' SUSPICION THAT IF WE STICK AROUND, WE'LL FIND OUT--

--THE HARD WAY!

COACH-- MRS. THORNE --ALICIA-- COME ON. WE'D BETTER GET OUT--

PRONTO!

AND IT'S A GOOD THING THEY DO-- FOR, SECONDS AFTER OUR HEROES HAVE ESCAPED TO A NEARBY ROOFTOP...

SPABOOM!

DONE! NOW NO ONE CAN TOUCH ME. I'M MILES FROM ANY ATTACKER, COMPLETELY UNREACHABLE!

SOON, I'LL DOCK THIS CAMOUFLAGED SPACE-CRAFT WITH MY SATELLITE MASTER-PIECE--

--AND THEN, THE EARTH MAY EXPECT A COUNT-DOWN--TO CONQUEST!

LIFE HAS BEEN HARD FOR VICTOR VON DOOM; HE'S HAD MORE THAN HIS SHARE OF REVERSALS, MORE THAN HIS PORTION OF DEFEAT.

NO DOUBT, THERE ARE SOME WHO SEE HIM AS THE UNDERDOG IN THIS TALE--

--AND NO DOUBT, THEY WON'T BE PLEASED BY THE UPCOMING TURN-OF-EVENTS--

--AND FRANKLY, THAT'S JUST TOO BAD.

DOOM! I'VE COME FOR YOU, DOOM--THIS IS YOUR DEATH!

DARKOTH! DON'T BE A FOOL-- YOU'RE NOT A DEMON-- YOU'RE A CYBORG--

--MY OWN CREATION, BUILT TO SERVE ME-- TO SERVE ME, YOU DOLT!

NOT SO. I AM DARKOTH-- CALLED THE DEATH-DEMON--

--AND NOT ALL YOUR LIES WILL SAVE YOU--

--FOR THE DEATH-DEMON WILL SEE YOU DIE!

NO, YOU FOOL-- NOT NOW! NOT NOW!

NOT NOW!!!

IF THERE WERE **SOUND** IN OUTER SPACE, WE COULD HAVE **HEARD** THE EXPLOSION, AS DOOM'S SPACE-CRAFT, OFF-COURSE, **CRASHES** INTO THE VIBRO-BOMB SATELLITE...

AS IT IS, WE MAY ONLY **WATCH** AS THE IGNITING GASES **SWELL** LIKE A MINIATURE SUN... AND THEN **FADE**...

...SHRINKING AT LAST TO A **PINPRICK** OF LIGHT...THEN TO A SPOT...AND FINALLY...

GONE...BOTH DOOM'S SHIP AND THE **BOMB**, VANISHED IN AN INSTANT...

DOES THAT MEAN WE'RE **SAFE**, REED?

SAFE? MEDUSA, THAT'S A WORD I HAVEN'T UNDERSTOOD IN **YEARS**.

BUT FOR NOW, I SUPPOSE WE **ARE**...

"...AS SAFE AS WE CAN **EVER** BE, AS LONG AS WE'RE **THE FANTASTIC FOUR**."

HEY, **LOOK**, GANG--IT'S **SNOWING**. FEELS KINDA **PEACEFUL** AFTER ALL WE'VE BEEN THROUGH, DOESN'T IT?

BEN--ARE YOU **HERE**?

RIGHT **WITH** YA, ALICIA HONEY...

IS IT **OVER**, BEN...ALL OF IT, **OVER**?

YEAH, IT'S OVER, ALICIA... INCLUDIN' YER CHANCES OF GETTIN' YER **SIGHT** BACK.

GUESS THAT WUZ ONLY A **PLOY** TA GET ME AWAY FROM THE **OTHERS**... A CRUMMY **DECOY**.

HEY, PARTNER--YOU CAN'T BLAME **YOURSELF** FOR WHAT HAPPENED.

IT WAS **DOOM'S** FAULT--**ALL** OF IT!

MAYBE. AND MAYBE ALICIA WOULDN'T'A BEEN **USED** LIKE THAT, IF HER GUY WASN'T **THE THING**.

MAYBE THAT **MAKES** IT MY FAULT, TORCHY.

MAYBE THAT'S SOMETHING I SHOULD **THINK** ABOUT--**HARD**.

NEXT: NIGHTMARE IN THE SNOW!

FANTASTIC FOUR

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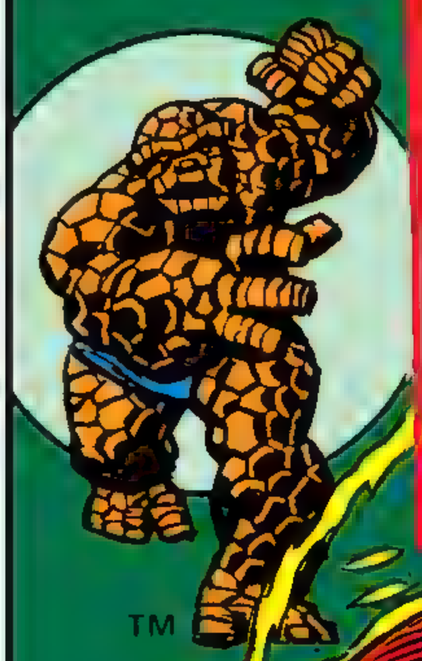

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TERNAK! THE MONSTER WHO WALKS THE MIDNIGHT SNOWS!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

GERRY CONWAY, SCRIPTER / ROSS ANDRU, GUEST ARTIST* / JOE SINNOTT, INKER / JOHN COSTANZA, letterer / LINDA LESSMANN, colorist / ROY THOMAS, EDITOR / (*SUBBING FOR RICH BUCKLER)

IT'S DANGEROUS IN THE HIMALAYAS UNDER THE BEST OF CONDITIONS; UNDER THE WORST, IT'S A NIGHTMARE.

FIRST, THERE'S THE COLD -- NEARLY ALWAYS AT THE FREEZING LEVEL.

THEN, THERE'S THE WIND -- HARSH AND MURDEROUS.

AND FINALLY -- THE MOUNTAINS THEMSELVES: THE MOST TREACHEROUS RANGE IN THE WORLD. ONLY ONE WORD DESCRIBES IT --

-- AND THAT WORD IS -- DEATH!

NIGHTMARE IN THE SNOW!

DO YOU SEE ANYTHING, JOHNNY? IS THERE ANY WAY OFF THIS PEAK -- ANY WAY AT ALL?

IT LOOKS PRETTY BAD, MEDUSA. THERE'S A **PASS**--

BUT IT'S **TOO FAR** FOR ME TO **FLY** YOU--AND I **WON'T GO WITHOUT** YOU!

THEN WE'RE **TRAPPED** HERE. ODD... SOMEHOW, I NEVER THOUGHT IT'D **END** THIS WAY...

...THAT I'D DIE BECAUSE OF A **WRECKED POGO PLANE,** FROZEN TO DEATH ONLY FIFTY MILES FROM MY NATIVE **HOME.**

STILL... WE'RE NOT FINISHED **YET.** I'M SURE WE--

JOHNNY! I JUST **SENSED** SOMETHING...

AS THOUGH... SOMEONE WERE **WATCHING** US...

--WE'RE IN **BIIIIIIG** TROUBLE.

PERHAPS... BUT DON'T FORGET, JOHNNY STORM...BETWEEN THE TWO OF US, WE REPRESENT FIFTY PERCENT OF **THE FANTASTIC FOUR...**

BUT OF COURSE, THAT'S **IMPOSSIBLE.** NO ONE CAN SURVIVE IN THESE MOUNTAINS... WHICH IS PRECISELY WHAT **WORRIES** ME.

JOHNNY, HOW LONG WILL YOUR **FLAME** LAST IN THIS COLD?

ORDINARILY, I CAN KEEP IT GOING FOR ABOUT **TWENTY MINUTES.**

UNDER **THESE** CONDITIONS, THOUGH-- I WOULDN'T BET ON MORE THAN **FIFTEEN.** LET'S **FACE** IT, MEDUSA--

...SO IF *ANYONE* CAN DEFEAT THESE FROZEN HILLS, *WE* CAN.

WHY DON'T WE CHECK THE *RADIO* AGAIN? PERHAPS WE CAN *FIX* IT-- AT LEAST IT'S WORTH A--

BY AGON'S GENES!

IT SEEMS WE AREN'T ALONE *AFTER ALL,* JOHNNY!

WE'VE GOT *COMPANY--*

AND IT'S UNFRIENDLY!

WHOEVER THESE CREATURES ARE, THEY DON'T SPEAK ANY *HUMAN* LANGUAGE-- OR ANY *INHUMAN* ONE!

AND, JOHNNY--THERE'S SOMETHING *ELSE--*

--SOMETHING MY SENSITIVE *HAIR-STRANDS* COULD DETECT--

--THEIR SKIN IS FREEZING COLD!

GLAD TO *HEAR* IT, RED. THAT JUST MAKES THINGS *EASIER* FOR YOUR OLD BUDDY--*THE HUMAN TORCH.*

IF ONE OF MY *FIRE-BALLS* CAN SINGE YOUR *ORDINARY* WOULD-BE ATTACKER-- JUST THINK WHAT IT'LL DO TO *THESE* JOKERS!

:n

:A:

HEY, FELLAS-- WHAT'S YOUR *HURRY?*

THERE ARE A FEW *QUESTIONS* WE'D LIKE TO *ASK*--

LIKE, WHERE DO YOU *COME* FROM-- AND WHY'RE YOU AFTER :U--UNNNNH!:

OUT-SIDER *FOOL.*

TERNAK WILL ASK THE QUESTIONS-- AND *YOU* WILL ANSWER!

EEYOW! THAT HAND-- *FREEZING* ME--KILLING MY *FLAME!*

AND SOON IT WILL KILL *YOU,* BLAZING ONE! YOUR PUNY FIRE BALLS ARE *NOTHING* TO TERNAK-- AS *YOU* ARE NOTHING.

NOW, YOU WILL *TELL* ME-- WHY HAVE YOU COME TO *THE FAR HILLS?*

IS IT THAT YOU'VE LEARNED ABOUT THE CANNON? IS THAT WHY YOU'VE COME, OUTSIDER?

YOU'LL REGRET YOUR INTERFERENCE, THEN! FOR -- JUST AS WE DESTROYED YOUR SKY SHIP, WE WILL ALSO DESTROY--

YOU WILL DO NOTHING BUT RELEASE MY FRIEND, MONSTER--

DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

KLANG!

THANKS FOR THE ASSIST, MEDUSA. YOU DISTRACTED HIM--

--WHICH GIVES ME A CHANCE-- TO TRY MY WHITE HEAT BLAST!

SSISSSSSSSS

MY FACE!

BLINDED--CAN'T SEE! YOU MAY HAVE DEFEATED ME FOR THE MOMENT, OUTSIDER--

BUT IN THE END-- IT IS TERNAK WHO WINS!

JOHNNY? HE'S GONE...

--BUT WHERE?

THE GREAT REFUGE IS MILES AWAY--THE POGO PLANE IS RUINED -- AND THOSE SNOW-CREATURES COULD RETURN AT ANY MOMENT!

HOW DID WE GET INVOLVED IN SUCH A DISASTER? JUST TEN HOURS AGO, WE WERE IN NEW YORK--

HE'S UNCONSCIOUS. THE SHOCK TO HIS SYSTEM--TOUCHING THIS ICE LAYER SO SOON AFTER FLAMING TO HIS GREATEST HEAT--

--IT MUST HAVE KNOCKED HIM OUT. I'D BETTER GET HIM SOMEPLACE WARM--

"--IN ONE OF THE SPECIAL **EXERCISE ROOMS** IN THE BAXTER BUILDING, EASING OUR **TENSIONS** AFTER OUR CLIMACTIC BATTLE WITH **DOCTOR DOOM.** *

"THERE WERE **THREE** OF US IN THE ROOM: JOHNNY, MYSELF-- AND THE STRANGEST AND MOST **POWERFUL** MEMBER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR--

"BEN GRIMM-- **THE THING.**

HEY, RED-- GETTA LOAD OF **THIS.** I MUST BE GETTIN' **STRONGER** IN MY OLD AGE--!

I'M PUSHIN' TWO HUNDRED MORE **POUNDS** THAN I DID **LAST** WEEK--

--AND I AIN'T EVEN **BREATHIN'** HARD!

-*LAST ISSUE. --ROY.

UH-OH, BENJAMIN-- BETTER **WATCH OUT.**

WE WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO **STRAIN** YOURSELF.

AFTER ALL, LIFTING THAT MUCH WEIGHT CAN BE BAD FOR A MAN'S **HEALTH.**

MY HAND...

YA SINGED MY HAND!

I'LL GET YA FER THIS, YOU HALF-HEADED **FLAME-BRAIN!**

FOTCH!

KLUMB!

AN' I KNOW JUST THE WAY TA **DO IT,** TOO!

AW, COME ON, BEN-BABY! I ALWAYS KNEW YOU WERE **STUPID**-- BUT EVEN A CLOWN LIKE YOU MUST HAVE **SAME** ORIGINALITY.

"THE OLD **FIRE-HOSE** TRICK"?

MISTER, I THOUGHT UP AN ANSWER TO THAT ONE **YEARS** AGO.

"I DON'T KNOW WHETHER IT WAS AN **ACCIDENT**-- PERHAPS JOHNNY ONLY MEANT TO KNOCK THE HOSE FROM BEN'S **HAND**-- BUT INSTEAD, HE **BURST** THE FABRIC, AND--

SPRASH

THAT **DOES** IT!

UP TA NOW, I'VE BEEN **NICE**, TORCH-- BUT YA JUST WENT **TOO FAR!**

WHAM!

MAYBE YA DON'T **THINK** SO--

--BUT EVEN A BIG, GRUESOME **THING'S** GOT **DIGNITY**--

--AND WHEN YA **PLAY** WITH A MAN'S DIGNITY--

SONNY, YER PLÁYIN' WITH **FIRE!**

BA-HOOM!

BRUMP!

UMMPH!

HOPE I DIDN'T HURT 'IM *TOO* BAD, MEDUSA--BUT HE HAD IT *COMIN'!*

SOMETIMES HE ACTS LIKE I WUZ HIS OWN PERSONAL *DOORMAT*.. AND LADY, *NOBODY* ACTS LIKE THAT WITH *BEN GRIMM!*

WHOA... MY ACHING *HEAD..!*

HE'S *RIGHT*, JOHNNY...YOU *DID* HAVE IT COMING TO YOU, YOU'VE BEEN ACTING STRANGELY FOR *DAYS*...

IF YOU'LL TELL ME, I'D LIKE TO KNOW *WHY*.

I WOULD HAVE FIGURED YOU'D *GUESS*.

IT'S YOUR *SISTER*...

...*CRYSTAL*. I'VE BEEN TRYING FOR WEEKS...*MONTHS*... AND I JUST CAN'T GET HER OUT OF MY *MIND*,

THE IDEA OF HER AND *QUICKSILVER*... THE TWO OF THEM GETTING *MARRIED*...

...IT'S JUST *TOO MUCH*.

EVER SINCE SHE *TOLD* ME,* I'VE BEEN RUNNING IT OVER IN MY MIND--TRYING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT I DID *WRONG*--HOW I *FAILED* HER--

AND YOU *KNOW* SOMETHING? I NEVER DID.

JOHNNY, SOMETIMES A PERSON CAN--*HMMM*?

*IN FF #132. --RT.

MEDUSA--IF I'M NOT *INTERRUPTING* ANYTHING, I'D LIKE TO SPEAK WITH YOU A MOMENT.

IT'S *IMPORTANT*.

YES, REED? IS IT ABOUT *SUE*... HAVE YOU HEARD FROM HER?

NOT A WORD SINCE SHE *LEFT*, MEDUSA.

THIS IS SOMETHING *ELSE*--

--SOMETHING THAT CONCERNS *YOU*.

I'VE JUST RECEIVED A MESSAGE ON SUBSPACE RADIO FROM *BLACK BOLT*. HE WANTS YOU TO RETURN TO THE GREAT REFUGE--A *TEMPORARY* RETURN--

HE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT-- "*PROJECT REVIVAL*"?

COULD YOU TELL ME WHAT *THAT* MEANS?

I'M SORRY, REED, BUT IT'S A CLASSIFIED SECRET TO *THE INHUMANS*.

JOHNNY-- WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME *WITH* ME?

AND SEE *CRYSTAL* AGAIN--WITH *QUICKSILVER*?

THANKS, BUT *NO THANKS*, LADY--

--"NOT IN A MILLION YEARS." YOUR EXACT *WORDS*, JOHNNY.

I SAID *THAT*? GUESS YOU'RE MORE PERSUASIVE THAN YOU *LOOK*, MEDUSA...

IT'S ONE OF MY *VIRTUOUS* TRAITS, MR. STORM. AMONG THE MEMBERS OF MY FAMILY, I'M *KNOWN* FOR MY ABILITY TO GET MY OWN WAY.

SO NOW THAT I'M ON MY WAY TO THE GREAT REFUGE *WITH* YOU-- WILL YOU TELL ME WHY YOU WANTED ME *ALONG*?

AS YOU SAID YOURSELF, I'M NOT EXACTLY *CHEERFUL COMPANY* THESE DAYS.

I KNOW, JOHNNY. I WAS HOPING WE'D *TALK* ABOUT THAT WHILE WE-- *LOOK OUT!*

BBBRAK!

THE PLANE'S *VIBRATING*--

IT'S COMING APART!

"SUDDENLY, THERE WAS A MOMENT OF VERTIGO--

--A RUSH OF CHILLING AIR--

"--AND WE WERE FALLING, THE POGO PLANE'S REMAINS TUMBLING AROUND US!

FLAME ON!

GOTCHA, RED...! THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THAT HAIR OF YOURS COMES IN HANDY.

YOU'RE TELLING ME THAT, JOHNNY STORM?

WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE HAPPENED UP THERE--THE WAY THE POGO PLANE BROKE UP, IT WAS AS THOUGH--

--AS THOUGH IT'D BEEN SHOT DOWN. YEAH, I KNOW.

BUT LET'S FACE ONE THING RIGHT NOW, MEDUSA--THAT'S FLAT-OUT IMPOSSIBLE.

WE'RE IN THE HIMALAYAS, REMEMBER? HUNDREDS OF MILES FROM NOWHERE.

AND IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GOING TO STAY HERE, TOO. I CHECKED THE RADIO--IT'S AS KAPUT AS THE REST OF THE PLANE.

THEN WE'RE MAROONED?

MAYBE--MAYBE NOT. PUT ON THIS THERMO-PARKA WHILE I TAKE A LOOK AROUND.

AFTER ALL...

...WITH A LITTLE LUCK, I MIGHT FIND A PASS OUT OF HERE.

"BUT WE DIDN'T HAVE THAT LUCK...

...INSTEAD, WE WERE ATTACKED BY A ROVING BAND OF SNOW-CREATURES, LED BY A DEMON WHO THINKS WE'RE SPIES OF SOME SORT... AND WANTS TO KILL US.

TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, I'M AFRAID JOHNNY'S FLAME-POWER HAS BEEN INJURED BY THE COLD. HE'S WEARING A PARKA TO PRESERVE IT--AND EVEN SO, IT'S GETTING WEAKER...

...AND WITHOUT IT, WE MAY NOT LAST ANOTHER DAY!

ABRUPTLY, MEDUSA'S THOUGHTS ARE INTERRUPTED BY...

CREEAAK

THAT SOUND--! SOMEONE'S OUT THERE-- WATCHING US!

AND IF SOMEONE'S INTERESTED IN US--

--THE LEAST WE CAN DO IS BE INTERESTED IN HIM!

GOOD WORK, JOHNNY. THAT HEAT FLARE LIT THE MOUNTAIN LIKE SUNLIGHT.

WHY DON'T WE INVITE OUR FRIEND IN FOR A TALK?

MERCY, MASTERS! MERCY!

IT SEEMS YOU SPEAK ENGLISH, OLD ONE.

USE IT--AND TELL US WHAT YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS WANT.

PLEASE, MISTRESS-- KEEP THE FIERY ONE AWAY, AND I WILL EXPLAIN ALL. I OWE NO ALLEGIANCE TO TERNAK--!

IN POINT OF FACT, I WAS COMING TO WARN YOU OF THE DANGER YOU FACE--A DANGER WHICH THREATENS ALL OUTSIDERS!

YET FIRST I MUST TELL YOU SOMETHING OF OUR HISTORY... THAT YOU MAY UNDER-STAND US...

"...AND KNOW WHY WE ARE CALLED **THE CHOSEN.**

"**FIVE HUNDRED YEARS AGO,** THERE WAS A **MONASTERY** IN THE MOUNTAINS TO THE EAST, A PLACE OF GENTLE MEN, WHO EVERY TWO YEARS SENT A PARTY TO THE **VILLAGES** FAR BELOW...

"THEY WENT FOR **FOOD,** YOU SEE; THE MONKS WERE VEGETARIANS, FORBIDDEN TO EAT THE FLESH OF THE **GOATS** WHICH INHABIT THESE HEIGHTS.

"TO SURVIVE, THEY BOUGHT **RICE** FROM THE FARMERS IN THE DISTANT VALLEYS, A JOURNEY OF MANY DAYS...

"...A JOURNEY WHICH **FEW** COULD ENDURE... AND **LIVE.**

"THIS **PARTICULAR** TREK WAS WORSE THAN ANY IN THE HISTORY OF THE MONKS...

"...AND IN THE END, **ALL** OF THAT PARTY DIED...SAVE **ONE,** THE MAN WE CALL **THE MASTER.**

"AGAINST THE **ELEMENTS** THEMSELVES, HE STRUGGLED ON...

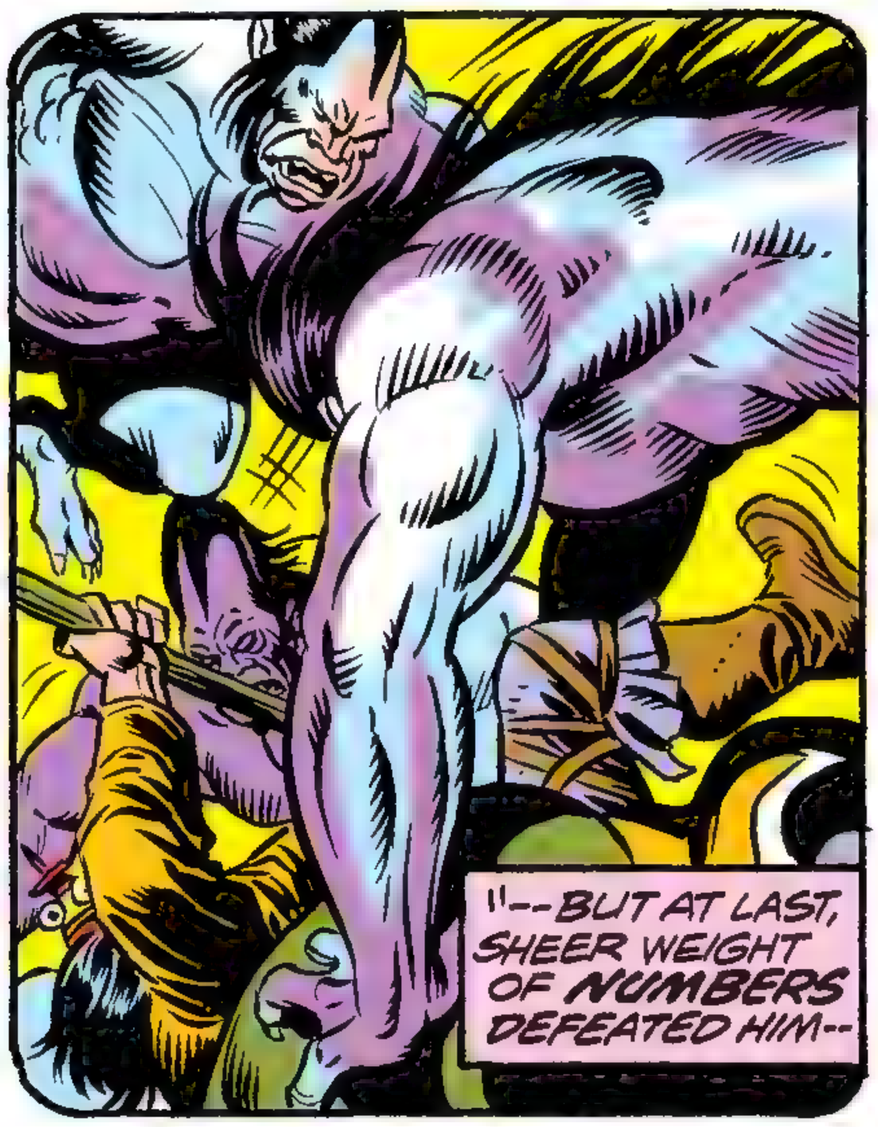
"...TILL AT LAST HE REACHED A **CAVE,** A CAVERN LESS COLD THAN OTHERS HE'D ENCOUNTERED... AND IT WAS THEN HE REALIZED HOW HOPELESSLY **LOST** HE WAS.

"FOR LONG MOMENTS, HE STOOD **STILL,** SUNK IN PRAYER... UNAWARE THAT, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY DAYS...

"...HE WAS NOT **ALONE.**

SRRAK!

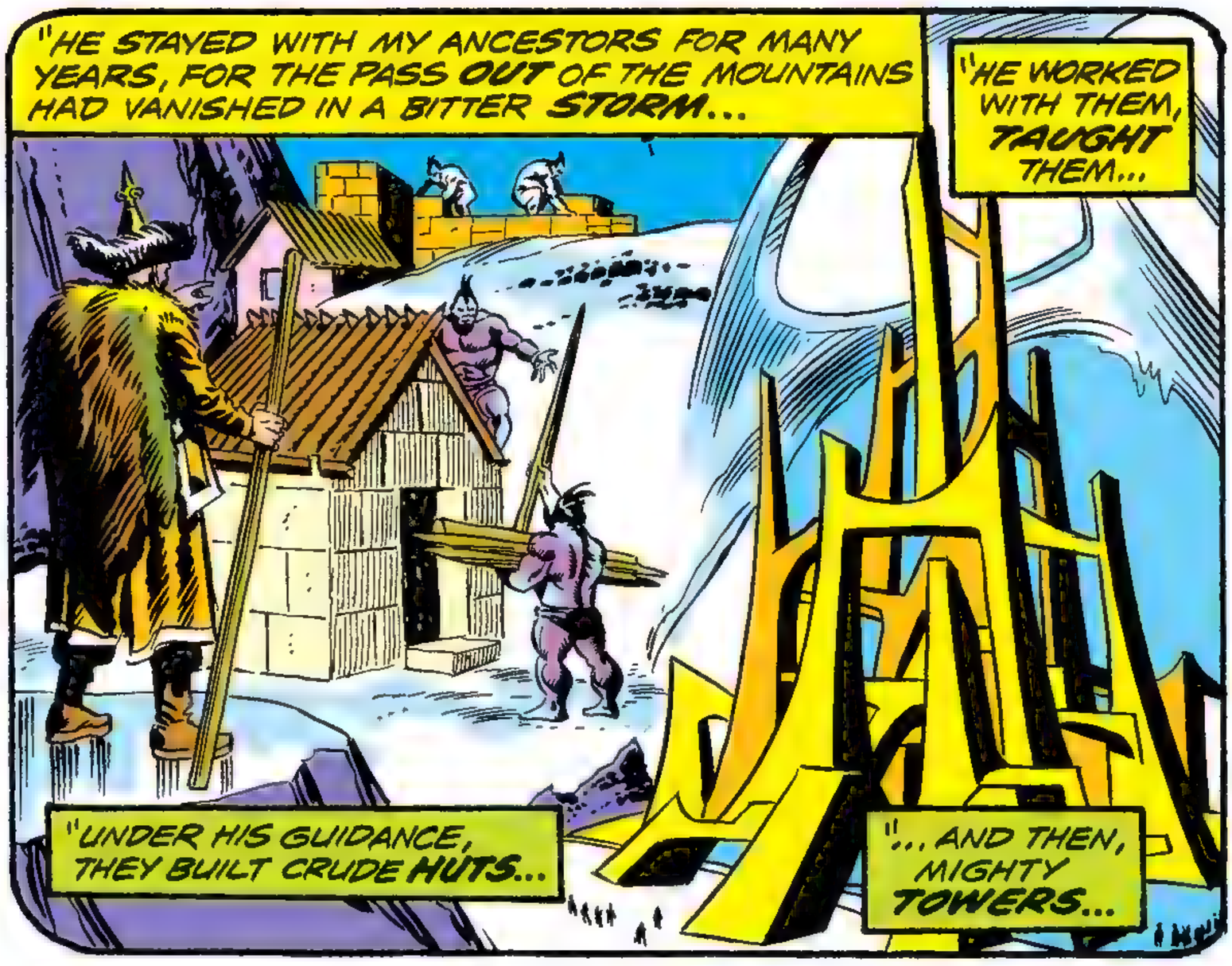
"HE MOVED MORE QUICKLY THAN ANY CREATURE MY PEOPLE HAD EVER ENCOUNTERED..
BRUNT!


"--BUT AT LAST, SHEER WEIGHT OF NUMBERS DEFEATED HIM--

"UNTIL--

"IT WAS A MIRROR... AND MY PEOPLE HAD NEVER SEEN A MIRROR. NATURALLY, THEY WERE FRIGHTENED... OVERCOME WITH FEAR...
"... AND WHERE VIOLENCE HAD LOST...

"...INTELLIGENCE WON.


"HE STAYED WITH MY ANCESTORS FOR MANY YEARS, FOR THE PASS OUT OF THE MOUNTAINS HAD VANISHED IN A BITTER STORM...
"HE WORKED WITH THEM, TAUGHT THEM...
"UNDER HIS GUIDANCE, THEY BUILT CRUDE HUTS...
"... AND THEN, MIGHTY TOWERS...

"FOR SIXTY YEARS, HE REMAINED WITH THEM... AND THROUGH HIM, THEY LEARNED THE LANGUAGES AND SCIENCES OF THE OUTSIDE...

...AND A DAY CAME WHEN HE GREW WEAK... AND SICK...

"AND FINALLY... DIED.

"MY PEOPLE MOURNED HIM FOR MANY WEEKS...

"...BUT AT LAST, THEY WENT ON.

SO IT WAS, UNTIL TERNAK CAME TO POWER.

OF ALL OUR LEADERS, ONLY HE WISHES TO USE THE SCIENCES OF THE MASTER FOR HARM-- TO CONQUER THE WORLD WITHOUT.

BECAUSE OF THIS, I COME TO YOU! THERE IS ONE WHO MUST BE WARNED, WHO CAN SAVE--

ZLAK!

LOOK OUT!

JOHNNY-- WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT WAS THAT--

A RAY-BLAST... FROM BEHIND US, IT DISSOLVED THAT OLD GUY--

--LIKE IT MUST'VE DISSOLVED OUR POGO PLANE!

YOU GUESSED THAT, DID YOU, FIERY ONE? THEN PERHAPS YOU'VE GUESSED SOMETHING ELSE...

...THE REASON FOR OUR BEING HERE...

...AND THE REASON WE WANT YOU.

THEN...

BEFORE EITHER OF OUR HEROES CAN REACT...

...THE SNOW-CREATURES LEAP...

...AND THE BATTLE IS SUDDENLY OVER.

HE WAKES AS THOUGH FROM A NIGHTMARE--

--AND FINDS HIMSELF IN A NIGHTMARE--

--AN ICY COLD ONE.

YOU ARE CONSCIOUS? GOOD. IN A SHORT WHILE, I WILL SUMMON YOU TO THE CENTRAL CHAMBER.

THERE YOU WILL TELL ME HOW YOU LEARNED OF MY PLANS... YOU WILL TELL ME WHO ELSE KNOWS OF OUR EXISTENCE... WHO SENT FOR YOU, BESIDES THAT DEAD TRAITOR.

MISTER, YOU'RE LIVING IN A PARANOID'S FANTASY-LAND.

YOU JEST, OUTSIDER-- BUT YOU WILL NOT JEST FOR LONG.

AS I DESTROYED YOUR SKY-SHIP, I WILL DESTROY ANY OTHERS WHO COME TO RESCUE YOU.

THINK ON THAT, ONCE-FIERY ONE!

BUT, AS SOON AS THE CELL DOOR CLOSES...

TERNAK'S A FIRST CLASS NUT. HE THINKS WE'RE SPIES...

...AND HE'LL NEVER BELIEVE WE'RE HERE BY ACCIDENT.

NOT THAT I'LL TRY TO CONVINCE HIM.

EITHER WAY, HE WANTS US DEAD--

--WHICH MEANS I'VE GOT TO BREAK OUT OF HERE--

--AND THAT MEANS I'VE GOT TO FLAME ON--!

NO MATTER HOW WEAK MY FLAME IS--I'VE GOT TO!

LONG SECONDS PASS AS JOHNNY STORM BRINGS ALL HIS WILL-POWER TO BEAR...FIGHTING THE SHUDDERS WHICH RUN THROUGH HIM...

...STRUGGLING AGAINST THE WEAKNESS OF HIS FLESH, UNTIL...

I DID IT!

NOW WE'LL SEE SOME ACTION AROUND HERE--

..TORCH STYLE!

MELTING THROUGH THE METAL DOOR LEADING TO THE CORRIDOR WITHOUT, JOHNNY STREAKS ALONG THE DARKENED HALL, AS...

HEY, MEDUSA...

I LIKE YOUR STYLE, HAIR-LADY...

...BUT I THINK THIS MIGHT BE JUST A TRIFLE MORE EFFECTIVE.

WELL, WHADDAYA SAY? SHALL WE GO GET 'EM?

MY THOUGHT EXACTLY, MR. STORM.

THEN, LADY, *LEAD ON!*

IN THE WORDS OF AN ESTRANGED *BUDDY* OF MINE--

IT'S *CLOBBERIN'* TIME!

JOHNNY, *WATCH OUT!*

MEDUSA, YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME *TWICE*...

...'CAUSE IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED, *I'M A FAST LEARNER.*

THOSE LASER GUNS ARE *DANGEROUS*... SOOOO...

:BRRR:IC

WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE THEY'RE *SAYING*, JOHNNY?

PROBABLY *SOMETHING* LIKE--

"DON'T LOOK AT *ME*--I WAS JUST FOLLOWING *ORDERS!*"

WHOOPS! THERE GO OUR *PLAYMATES*--

AND UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS-- THIS DOOR LEADS *OUT.*

LET'S SPLIT-- GET TO THE *INHUMANS*--

--IF WE CAN *WARN* THEM IN TIME, THEY MIGHT BE ABLE TO *STOP*-- UH-OH.

LOOKS LIKE I MISSED MY *GUESS*, MEDUSA.

INDEED YOU **HAVE,** OUTSIDER. WELCOME TO THE **CENTRAL CHAMBER...**

...WE'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU!

THE DEVICE AT WHICH YOU'RE **GAPING** IS UNIQUE AND OF MY OWN **DEVISING.**

AS YOU'VE NO DOUBT GUESSED, MY PEOPLE ARE **TRAPPED** IN THIS HIGH ALTITUDE BECAUSE OF OUR **BODY-TEMPERATURE...**

...ONE SEVERAL DOZEN DEGREES COWER THAN YOURS NATURALLY, WE COULD NEVER **SURVIVE** IN YOUR WORLD, THOUGH THERE IS MUCH THAT YOU OUT-SIDERS HAVE THAT WE COULD **USE.**

SO...WE MUST EITHER CHANGE OURSELVES... OR CHANGE THE MEAN AVERAGE **TEMPERATURE** OF THIS ENTIRE **PLANET.**

NOW SEE IF YOU CAN GUESS **WHICH** WE INTEND TO DO.

A HINT, MY FRIENDS--THE NAME OF THIS MACHINE IS--**THE CLIMATE CANNON!**

JOHNNY--THE RAYS FROM THAT "CANNON"--PULSING **WITHIN** ME--**FREEZING ME!**

IS IT **TRUE?** CAN IT DO WHAT HE **CLAIMS?**

IF IT **CAN,** MEDUSA--WE'RE FINISHED, **ALL** OF US! YOU, ME, THE INHUMANS--THE **FANTASTIC FOUR**--

THE ENTIRE PLANET--**DOOMED!**

NEXT ISSUE:

A **SECRET** REVEALED--AN AWESOME **TRANSFORMATION**--ALL YOURS, IN

WINTER OVER THE WORLD!

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FANTASTIC FOUR®

BIG BATTLE ISSUE
THE THING GOES WILD!

HOLD ONTO YER HARD-HATS, KIDDIES--

--'CAUSE WE'RE BUSTIN' OUTTA HERE-- IF IT KILLS US!

AND IT JUST MAY, IN THE SENSES-SHATTERING TALE WE CALL--
DOOMSDAY AT 200° BELOW!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

GERRY CONWAY, WRITER / ROSS ANDRU, ARTIST / JOE SINNOTT, EMBELLISHER / JOHN COSTANZA, letterer / GEORGE ROUSSOS, colorist / ROY THOMAS, EDITOR

DOOMSDAY: 200° BELOW!

JOHNNY--THAT CLIMATE CANNON OF TERNAK'S--ITS RAYS ARE FREEZING US, TURNING OUR BODIES TO ICE--!

WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING--STOP HIM SOMEHOW--BEFORE HE CAN TURN THAT MACHINE ON THE WORLD--

--AND FREEZE THE ENTIRE PLANET!

I KNOW, MEDUSA, I KNOW! BUT HEAVEN FORGIVE US--WE'RE HELPLESS!

WHAT'S-GOING-ON-HERE DEPT.: BETCHA YOU'RE SORRY YA MISSED LAST ISH, AREN'T YA? WELLL... KEEP READING, AND WE'LL FILL YOU IN ON THE TWO PAGES FOLLOWING:

ISN'T THERE SOMETHING WE CAN DO? YOUR FLAME, JOHNNY-- IF YOU BECAME THE HUMAN TORCH, YOU COULD--

HE COULD DO NOTHING, INHUMAN... AND NEITHER COULD YOU, WITH YOUR UNCANNY HAIR.

IN A MATTER OF HOURS, I WILL FOCUS THE CLIMATE CANNON ON THE EARTH'S EQUATOR...

"WITHIN MINUTES, THE EFFECTS WILL BE FELT ACROSS THE WORLD, AS THE PLANETARY TEMPERATURE DROPS, BECOMING WHAT IT WAS A MILLION YEARS AGO, DURING THE ICE AGE...

"YOU HUMANS CONSIDER YOURSELVES SUPREME, THE PINNACLE OF CREATION. YET WE EXISTED BEFORE YOU, AND WE SHALL EXIST AFTER YOUR PASSING!

"WHEN THE SNOWS FALL IN THE CITY YOU CALL MOSCOW, WHEN THE CLIMATE IN NEW YORK BECOMES TOO COLD TO SUPPORT LIFE, WE WILL BE WATCHING... AND LAUGHING... FOR WE SHALL HAVE OVERCOME!

"WE, THE CREATURES YOUR KIND HAVE CALLED ABOMINABLE SNOWMEN... WE SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH, WE SHALL RULE WHERE MEN ONCE WALKED...

"AND NEITHER YOU NOR YOUR PUNY-POWERED FELLOWS, CAN DO ANYTHING TO STOP US!"

THAT YOU TWO ARE HERE NOW IS BUT A MINOR INCONVENIENCE.

PLEASANTLY-- YOUR DESTRUCTION WILL BE EASIER.

YOUR SKY-BOAT WAS EASY TO DESTROY--*

*MEANING THE POGO PLANE, LAST ISH. --ROY.

SO THAT'S HOW YOU SEE IT, HUH, TERNAK?

I'M GLAD TO HEAR IT, PAL-- BECAUSE THAT'S JUST THE SORT OF ARROGANCE I NEED--!

IT MAKES ME MAD--

--AND BUSTER, THAT BURNS ME UP.

IN CASE YOU'RE INTERESTED, MEDUSA AND I WEREN'T EVEN LOOKING FOR YOU CLOWNS-- WE WERE ON OUR WAY TO HER HOMELAND, UNTIL YOU BUTTED IN LIKE A GRADE B LOONEY!

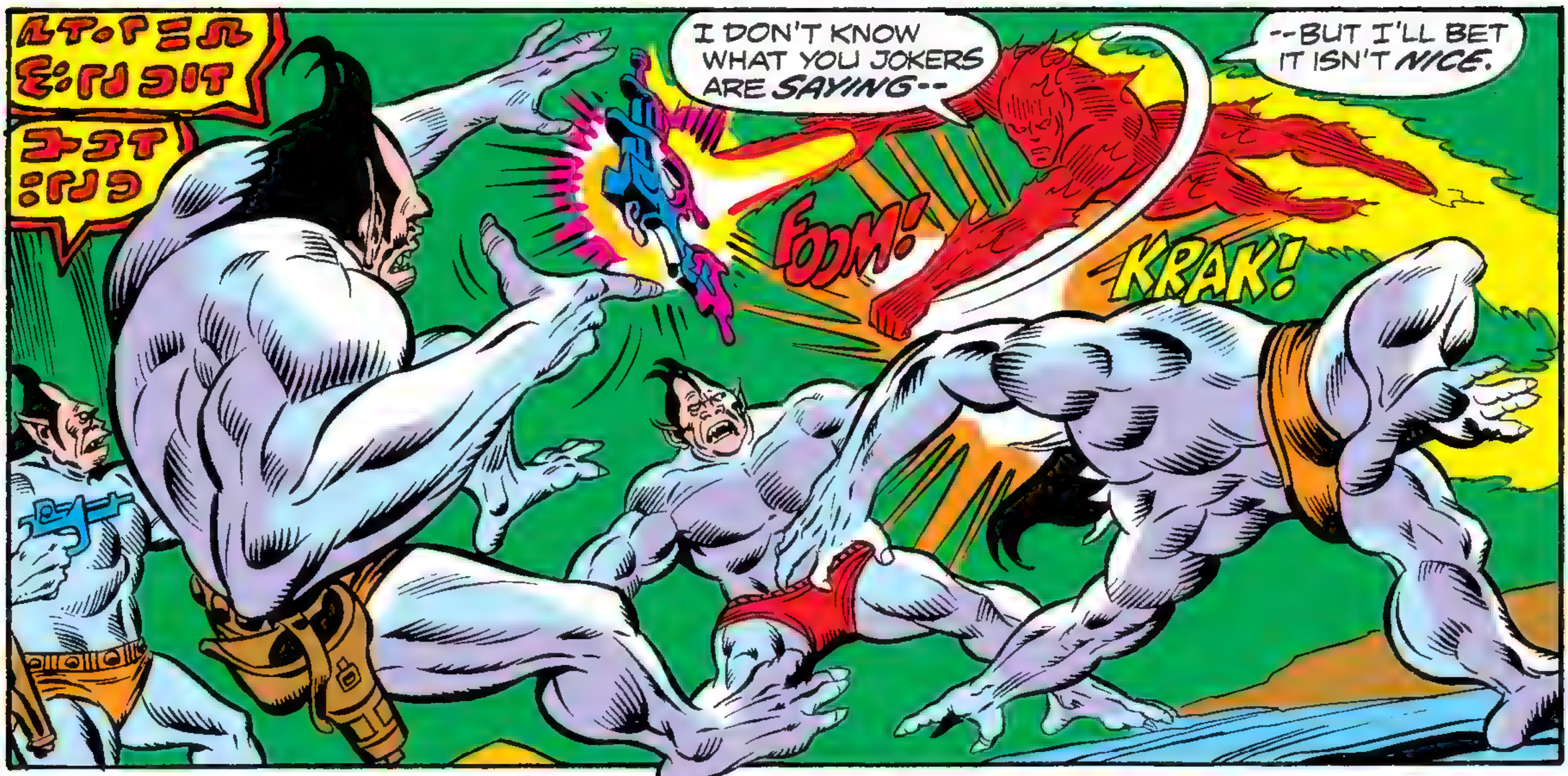
SO WHEN YOU FIND THIS PLACE IN A SHAMBLES AROUND YOU, BLAME YOURSELF--

--YOU'RE THE JERK WHO START-ED IT!

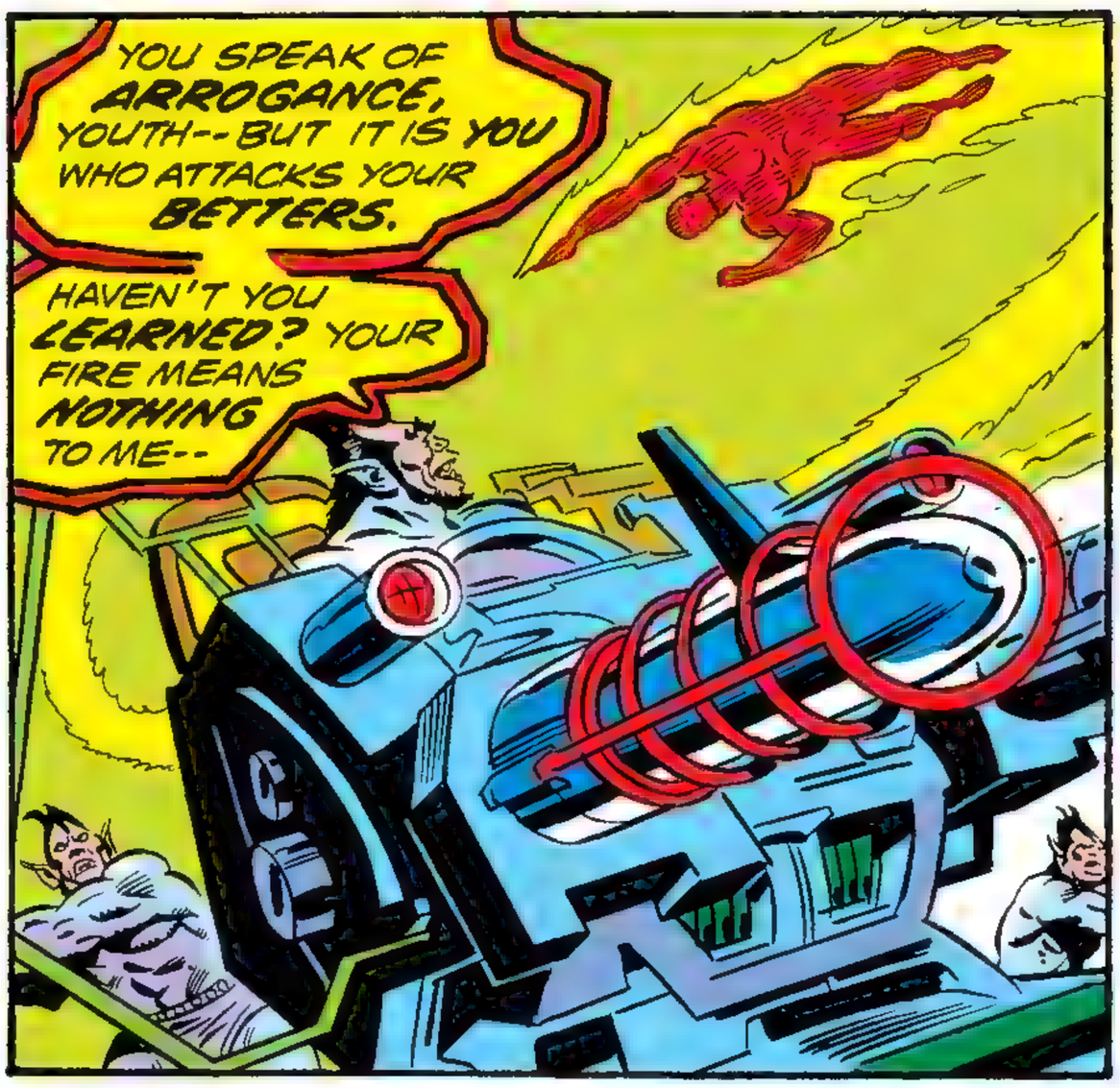
JOHNNY, YOU DID IT!

RED, YOU AIN'T SEEN NUTHIN'!

FLAME ON!


I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU JOKERS ARE SAYING--
--BUT I'LL BET IT ISN'T NICE.
FOOM!
KRAK!

SEE? SO WHAT IF I'M NOT A COLLEGE GRAD?
FOREIGN LANGUAGES AREN'T THAT HARD TO MASTER--
--ONCE YOU PICK UP THE GENERAL TONE.


YOU SPEAK OF ARROGANCE, YOUTH--BUT IT IS YOU WHO ATTACKS YOUR BETTERS.
HAVEN'T YOU LEARNED? YOUR FIRE MEANS NOTHING TO ME--

IT'S SIMPLY AN ANNOYANCE, TO BE DEALT WITH--
BUNT!
SO!
UNNNNHH!

JOHNNY!
IF HE STRIKES THAT ICE WALL, HE'LL BE KILLED.
PRAY AGON, LET ME MOVE QUICKLY ENOUGH...!

A SPLIT INSTANT: BUT BEFORE JOHNNY STORM CAN DO MORE THAN REALIZE HE'S AT THE END OF HIS OWN PRIVATE LINE...

FAR OUT. PRETTY LADY, THAT'S WHAT I CALL SERVICE.

YOU CAN THANK MY ANCESTORS, JOHNNY. THEY BRED FOR CERTAIN GENES-- CERTAIN POWERS BEYOND THE REALM OF HUMAN ABILITY.

NOW WE CALL OUR-SELVES INHUMANS, MY COUSINS AND I--FOR THOUGH HUMANS HAVE LIVING HAIR--

--MINE CAN ACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH MY EVERY WHIM--

GG

--AND STRIKE ON MY COMMAND!

BUT WE FORGET OURSELVES, JOHNNY. UNLESS WE ACT DECISIVELY, TERNAK REMAINS A THREAT--

WHOMP!

--A THREAT WHICH MUST BE DESTROYED!

YOU ARE AS RASH AS YOUR YOUNG PARTNER, WOMAN!

IN TRUTH, I DON'T KNOW WHICH DEATH I'LL ENJOY MORE: HIS--OR YOURS!

KILL THEM, FOOLS! KILL THEM NOW!

AS JOHNNY TOLD YOU, TERNAK... WE WERE SIMPLY PASSING BY WHEN YOU ATTACKED US...

I'D RE-CEIVED AN URGENT MESSAGE TO RETURN TO MY PEOPLE..*

*IN THE GREAT REFUGE, ALSO IN THE HIMALAYAS. --RT.

...AND EVERY MOMENT I SPEND FIGHTING *YOU* DELAYS THE HOUR WHEN I REACH THEM.

SINCE YOU'VE NO INTENTION OF *HALTING* THIS NONSENSE...

...I *WILL.*

KRUMP!

THE *MACHINE*-- THE *MACHINE!*

SEVERAL DIZZY SECONDS LATER, AS THE LEADER OF THE SNOWMEN REGAINS HIS SCATTERED *SENSES*...

VIXEN! WE SPENT *DECADES* DESIGNING AND BUILDING THE CLIMATE CANNON! IF YOU'VE *DESTROYED* IT--

TO SAY THE LEAST, YOUR DEATH WILL *NOT* BE *SWIFT!*

GOOD GOD!!

GONE? THE FOOLS... HAVE THEY FORGOTTEN THAT THESE CAVES ARE *OURS*...?

AND THAT THE TEMPERATURE *OUTSIDE* IS CLOSE TO THE *FREEZING POINT?*

THEY CAN'T ESCAPE... SO *FIND* THEM, YOU BLUNDERING *BUFFOONS.*

WITHIN THE HOUR, I WANT THEM *HERE*--

--SO THEY CAN WITNESS OUR FINAL AND EVER-LASTING *TRIUMPH!*

HE'S *RIGHT,* MEDUSA. WE'RE *TRAPPED.*

ANY *IDEAS?*

BETWEEN US WE REPRESENT FIFTY PERCENT OF *THE FANTASTIC FOUR,* JOHNNY--

IF *ANYONE* CAN DEFEAT TERNAK, *WE* CAN.

SOMEHOW, THAT DOESN'T SOUND VERY *OPTIMISTIC,* MEDUSA. I--

HUH?

WE HAVE A VISITOR, JOHNNY. SHE SEEMS FRIENDLY ENOUGH--

--AND APPARENTLY WANTS TO KEEP US FROM BEING DIS-COVERED, THE WAY SHE'S MOTIONING US TO BE QUIET.

HERE, COLORS AND SHAPES SEEM TO MINGLE WITH THE FABRIC OF THE DARKNESS... SOUNDS DRIFT OFF, AND RETURN AS FAINT ECHOES...

...AND ONE'S ONLY COMPANION SOON BECOMES THE BEATING OF ONE'S HEART...

...AND THE RASP OF BREATH THROUGH LABORING LUNGS.

SHE WANTS US TO FOLLOW HER. DO WE TRUST HER, JOHNNY?

I HOPE I DON'T NEED TO POINT OUT-- WE HAVEN'T MANY OTHER OPTIONS.

YOU'RE RIGHT, MEDUSA...

YOU DIDN'T NEED TO POINT IT OUT.

SOON, THE SHOUTS AND CRIES OF TERNAK AND HIS FOLLOWERS FADE IN THE DISTANCE, AS JOHNNY AND MEDUSA TRAIL THE UNSPEAKING SNOWGIRL THROUGH DARK, UNLIT PASS-AGES...

...AND FIND THEMSELVES IN A TWILIGHT WORLD BEYOND THEIR WILDEST IMAGININGS.

YOU KNOW, MEDUSA-- THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH BEAUTY A GUY CAN TAKE.

AFTER A WHILE, YOU START THINKING... ABOUT WHAT YOU'VE DONE WITH YOUR LIFE...

...WHAT YOUR FRIENDS HAVE DONE WITH THEIRS...!

DO YOU MEAN REED?

YEAH. EVER SINCE REED USED THAT ANTI-MATTER RAY ON HIS KID*, I'VE BEEN TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW I SHOULD FEEL ABOUT IT.

AT FIRST, I GOT MAD... AFTER ALL, THE KID'S MY NEPHEW, HIS MOTHER'S MY SISTER... I HAD TO GET ANGRY... IF I DIDN'T, I'D HAVE BEEN AS COLD AS REED.

BUT NOW, I'M NOT SO SURE... MAYBE I HAVEN'T BEEN FAIR WITH MY BROTHER-IN-LAW...

PERHAPS YOU HAVEN'T, JOHNNY.

*FF #141. --ROY.

REED RICHARDS HAS NEVER BEEN A SIMPLE MAN.

HE LOVES FRANKLIN-- AND HE LOVES SUE-- MORE THAN ANY OF US CAN KNOW.

THEN WHY'D HE PUT HIS OWN SON INTO A COMA, MEDUSA?

BECAUSE HE HAD NO OTHER CHOICE--

JUST AS WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO FOLLOW THAT GIRL INTO THIS CAVE.

I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN, MEDUSA.

MAYBE LIFE ISN'T BLACK AND WHITE, AFTER ALL...

"ONLY FOOLS EVER CLAIMED IT WAS, JOHNNY STORM."

FOR SEVERAL SECONDS, THE TWO FRIENDS MOVE WORDLESSLY THROUGH UTTER BLACKNESS, GUIDED BY THE FOOTSTEPS OF THEIR SILENT SAVIOR.

THEN...

WOW.

RED, DO YOU HAVE THE FEELING THERE'S MORE TO THIS GAME THAN WE'VE BEEN TOLD?

OBVIOUSLY. THE QUESTION IS-- HOW MUCH MORE?

LADY, IF WHAT I SUSPECT IS TRUE--

WE'RE LOOKING AT THE ANSWER RIGHT NOW!

MEANWHILE, ON THE ICY SLOPES NOT FAR FROM THE CAVES WHERE JOHNNY AND MEDUSA CONFRONT A SHADOWY FIGURE, THREE OF TERNAK'S SOLDIERS ARE FUTILELY TRYING TO COMPREHEND THE REMAINS OF THE FALLEN POGO PLANE*...

*BROUGHT DOWN BY TERNAK'S LASER CANNON LAST ISH. --RT.

...AND BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT QUITE AS SMART, NOT QUITE AS EDUCATED AS THEIR EGOCENTRIC LEADER... THEY'RE MAKING A REAL BOTCH OF IT.

GT-:ΠU

T:Π C3ll

T:ΠΣ T:Πll

PONT!

T:ll

4

ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN, EVEN AMONG THE MOST SOPHISTI-CATED MEN.

WHEN THE MEN ARE UNSOPHISTI-CATED, HOWEVER, ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN A BIT MORE FREQUENTLY.

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SO TELL US; ANYONE HERE RECOG-NIZE THE FANTASTIC FOUR EMERGENCY FLARE?

SURE YOU DO! AND HOW ABOUT THIS SILHOUETTED FIGURE SNEAKING UP ON OUR BUMBLING SNOWMEN?

BUSTER, I'M LOOKIN' FER A COUPLE 'A *PALS* OF MINE.

YA WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED TA *SEE* 'EM, *WOULD* YA?

C=1

CHUNT!

I WUZ *AFRAID* YOU'D SAY SUMTHIN' LIKE THAT.

T-DICAT

CT1=1 DAT T:11

OH *YEAH?*

WELL I SAY YER MOTHER WEARS ARMY BOOTS!

SPUNCH!

WHAP!

BUMP

THUD!

CHOOM!

SO MUCH FER *YOU* GUYS.

LOOKS LIKE I'LL HAFTA FIND SOMEBODY WITH A LITTLE MORE *SAVVY* TA TELL ME WHAT I WANNA KNOW...

AN' IF THAT MEANS I GOTTA TURN THESE MOUNTAINS *UPSIDE DOWN*...

... THEY BETTER GET THEIR BLASTED *SEAT BELTS ON!*

THE IDENTITY OF THE MYSTERIOUS GENT WE'VE JUST SEEN IN **BATTLE** SHOULDN'T BE **TOO** HARD FOR OUR MORE ASTUTE READERS TO **GUESS**...

BUT JUST IN CASE IT **IS**, WE'LL KEEP IT A **SECRET** A LITTLE WHILE LONGER, AND INSTEAD...

...REVEAL THE ANSWER TO THE MYSTERY CONFRONTING **JOHNNY STORM**:

YOU MUST BE--

-- THE ONE MY STUDENTS CALL **THE MASTER.**

I AM INDEED **HE**, YOUNG ONE.

I AM THE MONK WHO **FOUND** THESE CREATURES FIVE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, AND GAVE THEM THE RUDIMENTS OF **SCIENCE**...

...AND TRIED IN VAIN TO TEACH THEM **WISDOM** AS WELL.*

YOUR FACE **CANNOT** HIDE YOUR THOUGHTS: YOU WONDER HOW I HAVE **SURVIVED** THESE CENTURIES...

...BUT YOU MUST KNOW, I **HAVE NOT** SURVIVED, NOT AS **YOU** KNOW SURVIVAL.

"FOR A HUNDRED AND FORTY YEARS AGO, I **DIED** AS HUMANS MUST... MY SPIRIT FLED MY BODY, LEAVING BUT THIS MORTAL SHELL, DESTINED TO DECAY AND REJOIN THE **EARTH** ONCE MORE...

*RELATED LAST ISSUE. --RASCALLY.

"BUT SUCH WAS NOT TO **BE**; SEVERAL OF MY MORE **LOYAL** STUDENTS CLAIMED MY LIFELESS HUSK IN THE DARK OF **NIGHT**...

"...AND PLACED ME **HERE**, IN THIS **ENTROPY GLOBE** YOU SEE BEFORE YOU. WHAT THEY HOPED TO ACCOMPLISH, I SHALL NEVER **KNOW**...

"...FOR, INSTEAD OF RETURNING **LIFE** TO MY HUMBLE FORM...

"...THE MACHINE COULD ONLY **ANIMATE** MY FLESH... AND **RESTORE** MY THINKING **BRAIN**."

I HAVE REMAINED HERE FOR NIGH THESE **FOUR HUNDRED YEARS**, ALIVE AND YET **NOT** ALIVE, TENDED BY THE **DESCENDENTS** OF THOSE ORIGINAL LOYAL STUDENTS.

I HAVE **WATCHED** THE RISE OF WAR-MONGERS WITHIN THIS ONCE-GENTLE RACE...

...AND I AM **SADDENED** BY WHAT I MUST NOW DO.

THERE, YOUNG ONE...YONDER WEAPON IS WHAT YOU SHALL **NEED** TO CRUSH TERNAK'S **REBELLION**.

FOR THE SAKE OF THE **WORLD**, I GIVE IT TO YOU...

MAY THE GODS **FORGIVE** ME FOR WHAT I'VE DONE.

FORGIVE YOU? I DON'T **UNDER-STAND**. IF YOU'RE SAVING THE WORLD, THEN WHAT DOES IT MATTER **HOW**..?

JOHNNY, **PLEASE**. YOU'RE **YOUNG** YET... YOU DON'T COMPRE-HEND THESE THINGS...

BUT--

THE WOMAN IS **CORRECT**, JOHNNY STORM. REGARDLESS OF THE DANGER TO OURSELVES, WE HAVE NO **TRUE RIGHT** TO INFLICT OUR WILL ON OTHERS.

OURS IS A **SIN**...LESS GRAVE THAN THAT WHICH **TERNAK** COMMITS, BUT A SIN **NONETHELESS**.

IT IS MERELY **JUSTIFIED**...

NOT **SANCTI-FIED**.

A MOMENT OF SILENCE; THEN...

WELL. IF WE'RE TO SAVE THE WORLD, WE'LL HAVE TO SAVE IT **SOON**.

TERNAK WILL HAVE REPAIRED HIS **CLIMATE CANNON** BY NOW...

...AND I'VE NO DOUBT HE'LL BE **ECSTATIC** WHEN HE **SEES US**!

WE'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE SURE HE **DOESN'T** SEE US, MEDUSA--

AT LEAST, NOT **YOU**...

I'LL MAKE **SURE** OF IT-- **TORCH STYLE**!

OKAY, WE'VE SET THINGS UP, ESTABLISHED PRIORITIES, EXPLAINED A FEW **MYSTERIES**; LET'S LEAVE THE **REST** OF OUR EXPLANATIONS FOR **LATER**, AND DEVOTE THE NEXT FEW PAGES TO...

LIGHTS... CAMERAS... **ACTION!**

UPON MY COMMAND, SET THE CANNON ON **MAXIMUM DISPERSAL.**

STUFF IT IN YOUR **EAR**, BOZO!

CLOWNS LIKE YOU MAKE ME **SICK.**

WHILE EVERY-ONE **ELSE** IN THIS WORLD IS TRYING TO GET HIS OWN PERSONAL **LIFE** TOGETHER--

-- YOU GO AROUND ACTING LIKE A BLASTED **GOD!**

MAYBE THAT'S OKAY FOR YOUR **FLUNKIES**...

...BUT MISTER, IT'S NOT OKAY FOR **ME!**

SUDDENLY:

T:11

SOUNDS LIKE YER FINALLY **GROWIN' UP**, TORCHIE.

IF YA KEEP ON THINKIN' LIKE YA **BEEN** THINKIN', YA MIGHT **AMOUNT** TA SOMETHIN' SOMEDAY...

YA MIGHT EVEN GET TA BE AS LOVEABLE AS **ME**... **THE BASHFUL, BLUE-EYED THING!**

BEN!

WHAT'RE *YOU* DOING HERE? THE LAST I SAW, YOU WERE IN *NEW YORK*--

--AND I'D BE THERE *NOW*, IF SOMETHIN' HADN'T COME UP THAT NEEDS *YOU* TA *SOLVE IT!*

UH-OH, LOOKS LIKE YER POINTY-HEADED PAL'S *GETTIN' AWAY!*

I'LL HAFTA *FIX* THAT, AFTER I TAKE CARE OF *THESE* TWO JERKS!

SWEET DREAMS, BUDDY-BOYS.

THE *CANNON!* IF I CAN *REACH IT--!*

NOT A *CHANCE*, HANDSOME.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT TINKER-TOY *DOES--*

BUT IF *YOU* WANT IT--YA CAN'T *HAVE IT!*

SPAW!

SPOOM!

FREAKISH FOOL!

YOU HAVEN'T THE POWER TO STOP ME!

THAT'S WHERE YER *WRONG*, SPOCK-EARS. I'VE TAKEN ON GOONS FROM *DOC DOOM* TA THE *YANCY STREETERS--*

--AN' I'VE BEATEN 'EM *ALL*, SOME FASTER 'N *OTHERS--*

--AND PRETTY BOY, YOU'RE NO EXCEPTION!

HEY, TORCH! IF YA GET A CHANCE, YA MIGHT TELL ME WHAT ALL THIS IS ABOUT. I LIKE A BRAWL AS MUCH AS ANY JOKER, BUT I LIKE TA KNOW WHY I'M BRAWLIN'--

KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

WHAH!

IF THAT'S A SUBTLE REFERENCE TO THE FIGHT WE HAD BEFORE I LEFT ON THIS TRIP-- AMIGO, I'D LIKE TO APOLOGIZE.

I'VE BEEN GOING THROUGH SOME HEAVY THINKING, ABOUT YOU, AND REED, AND THE WHOLE FANTASTIC FOUR...

...AND I HAVE A FEELING I'VE GOT MY PROBLEMS WORKED OUT NOW!

SWELL.

I'D STILL LIKE TA KNOW WHAT WE'RE FIGHTIN' ABOUT!

IT'S VERY *SIMPLE*, BEN. YOU AND JOHNNY ARE FIGHTING A *HOLDING ACTION*, WHILE I SET UP THE *WEAPON*...

OF COURSE, I'M NOT WITHOUT MY *OWN* PROBLEMS--

--THOUGH *SOME* ARE EASILY *DISPOSED*.

CRRRR

BUNT!

YOUR *FRIEND* CANNOT *HEAR* YOU, WOMAN--

--AND SOON, HE WILL NO LONGER HEAR *ANYTHING*-- *EVER AGAIN!*

BUNK!

THE DAY AIN'T *COME* WHEN A POP GUN LIKE THAT CAN-- *HUH?*

KA-BOOM!

WHAWUZZAT?

I KNOCKED HIM INTA THAT *CLIMATE CANNON* GIZMO, AND THE WHOLE WORLD GOES UP LIKE A CRUMMY *FIRE-CRACKER!*

HEY, MEDUSA-- WHATEVER THAT *WEAPON* OF YOURS WAS--*FOR-GET IT.*

THE BALLGAME'S *OVER!*

I *CAN'T*, BEN! IT'S ALREADY IN *OPERATION!*

AND IT WON'T *SHUT OFF!*

EERIE, ETHEREAL, THE *WEIRD GREEN LIGHT PULSES OVER* THE *BATTLE-TORN CAVERN*...

...ITS PURPOSE *UNKNOWN*...

...ITS POTENTIAL EFFECT, A TOTAL *MYSTERY!*

AT FIRST, THE SNOWMEN CRINGE IN FEAR, THROW UP HANDS AND STEP BACK, SENSING THEIR FINISH...

THEN, AN UNCANNY TRANS-FORMATION OCCURS, AS THE EMERALD GLOW BATHES EACH OF THE SNOWMEN IN A CONTINUOUS, MYSTICAL RADIATION...

...UNTIL THE METAMORPHOSIS IS OVER, AND WHERE ONCE STOOD CREATURES CON-DEMNED TO THE COLD...

...NOW STAND MEN WHOSE FLESH MUST BE WARMED BY FIRE.

SOMEBODY BETTER TELL ME WHAT'S GOIN' ON, BEFORE I START HITTIN' THINGS

I WILL TELL YOU, MY FRIEND.

THE GIRL-- SHE CAN TALK!

OF COURSE. HAVE I NOT BEEN TRAINED BY THE MASTER?

HE THANKS YOU FOR YOUR AID: MY PEOPLE WILL NOT THREATEN THE WORLD AGAIN...

...FOR NOW THEY ARE PART OF THAT WORLD, FOR-EVERMORE.

I GET IT... SINCE THEY'RE NOW LIKE US, THEY DON'T NEED THE CLIMATE CANNON TO ENTER THE OUT-SIDE.

YEAH-- BUT WHY DIDN'T HE DO THIS BEFORE?

OUT OF HOPE, MY FRIEND...

...HOPE THAT MY PEOPLE WOULD LEARN THEIR ERROR ON THEIR OWN, AND SO NOT HAVE THIS FATE FORCED UPON THEM.

WERE IT NOT FOR TERNAK'S AMBITION, THEY MIGHT HAVE.

FAREWELL ...AND THANK YOU.

KNOW SUMTHIN', TORCHIE? I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED BACK THERE...

NEITHER DO WE, BEN... NOT FULLY.

BUT I KNOW THIS: THE MASTER SAID HE HAD NO SOUL, NO SPIRIT...

...AND MISTER... HE WAS WRONG.

NEXT ISSUE THE SUB-MARINER!

GIANT SIZE SUPER-STARS

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SPECIAL ISSUE

GIANT-SIZE SUPER-STARS™

FEATURING:

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FIRST FABULOUS ISSUE!

NEW! THE WILDEST THING VS. HULK BATTLE OF ALL!

AND WAIT'LL YOU FIND OUT WHO WINS!

RICH & JOE

BONUS! A ROGUE'S GALLERY OF THE WORLD'S MOST SINISTER SUPER-VILLAINS!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

THE MIND OF THE MONSTER!

CHAPTER ONE!

GERRY CONWAY.... WRITER
RICH BUCKLER.... ARTIST
JOE SINNOTT..... EMBELLISHER
ARTIE SIMEK, LETTERER | P. GOLDBERG, COLORIST
ROY THOMAS..... EDITOR

EVERYWHERE HULK GOES, PLANES *FOLLOW* HIM!

HULK *TIRED* OF BEING *HUNTED.* HULK WANTS *PEACE...*

...AND HULK WANTS IT NOW!

WABA NEWS

KRUMP!

*DON'T WORRY YOUR HALCYON HEAD THAT OUR HARASSED HEROES AREN'T ON OUR **SPLASH PAGE**--THEY'LL BE ALONG ANY **PANEL** NOW! --ROY.

HARRY, DO YOU REALIZE WHO THAT *WAS?*

I REALIZE, ROGER... I *REALIZE!*

BROOKLYN QUEENS X-WAY

THE QUESTION IS--HOW DO WE TELL OUR BOSS AT THE *RADIO STATION* THAT HIS TRAFFIC COPTER WAS JUST *KNOCKED OUT OF THE SKY--*

--BY THE BLASTED *JOLLY GREEN GIANT--*

--WITHOUT EVEN A *HO-HO-HO!*

*SURE, **WE** KNOW THIS ISN'T THE MOST **ORTHODOX** WAY TO OPEN OUR FIRST TITANIC ISSUE OF **MARVEL GIANT-SIZE SUPER-STARS!** BUT WHEN YOU'RE DEALING WITH CHARACTERS LIKE OLD **GREENSKIN**...*

*WELL, IT'S KIND OF HARD TO START THINGS OFF **WITHOUT** A BANG... KNOW WHAT WE **MEAN**?*

*AND JUST IN CASE YOU'RE **WONDERING**, THIS STORY OCCURS **BEFORE** THE EVENTS IN THE HULK'S OWN MAG...*

*...BUT ONLY BY A COUPLE'A DAYS, IF YOU WANNA BE **PICKY**....!*

SOMEHOW, HULK IS BACK IN *CITY*... AND HULK DOESN'T KNOW *WHY!* SOMETHING *MADE* HULK COME HERE, SOMETHING *INSIDE* HIM...

IF *MAGICIAN** MADE HULK COME TO CITY, HULK WILL *HIT* HIM. HULK *HATES* THE CITY... TOO MANY PEOPLE... TOO MANY PEOPLE WHO WANT TO *HUNT* HULK, WANT TO *HURT* HIM....!

THE HULK'S REFERRING TO **DOCTOR STRANGE, WHO HAS OCCASIONALLY SUMMONED THE EMERALD-SKINNED BEHEMOTH TO AID **THE DEFENDERS**.--R.T.*

MAYBE IT *WASN'T* MAGICIAN. MAYBE IT WAS *BANNER.*

HULK WILL *KILL* BANNER IF HULK FINDS HIM...! HULK HATES BANNER MOST OF *ALL!*

BUT NOW, HULK IS *TIRED* OF RUNNING...

TIRED OF RUNNING... AND TIRED OF TRYING TO *THINK.*

NO ONE WILL *FIND* HULK HERE IN THE DARKNESS...

HULK WILL *SLEEP...*

...SLEEP...

IN THE FOLLOWING SECONDS, A STRANGE *TRANSFORMATION* TAKES PLACE *INCHES* FROM THE BUSY STREET...

...AS THE MAN-MONSTER KNOWN AS THE HULK REGAINS HIS *TRUE* IDENTITY...THAT OF THE MAN HE "HATES MOST OF ALL"...

...HIS TORMENTED ALTER-EGO...*ROBERT BRUCE BANNER,* PH.D.

*H*OURS PASS, AS BANNER'S WEARY BODY SOAKS UP MUCH-NEEDED *SLEEP;* THEN, AS TWILIGHT EXTENDS ITS SHADOWY FINGERS THROUGH THE STREETS AND ALLEYS OF MIDTOWN MANHATTAN...BRUCE BANNER *WAKES!*

I'M IN *NEW YORK!* THEN--IT *WASN'T* A DREAM--!

I'VE COME SO FAR--I *PRAY* THEY CAN HELP ME! AND IF *ANYONE* CAN STOP ME FROM BECOMING THE HULK AGAIN, IT'S *REED RICHARDS* AND--

--THE *FANTASTIC FOUR!*

*M*EANWHILE, AS BRUCE BANNER STARTS TOWARD THE DISTANT, GLOWING *BAXTER BUILDING,* IN THE UPPER TOWER OF THAT WORLD-FAMOUS HEADQUARTERS A FAMILIAR FIGURE COMPLETES A BIT OF *HOUSE-CLEANING...*

...IN A MANNER ONLY *BEN GRIMM* CAN.

*B*EN GRIMM, WHOM THE WORLD CALLS... *THE THING!*

THE WAY REED LEAVES THESE *GADGETS* OF HIS LYIN' AROUND, YA'D THINK THEY WUZ BLASTED *PAPER-WEIGHTS!*

AN' SINCE HIM AN' THE *REST* OF THE GANG ARE OFF ON SOME *EXPERIMENT*--I'M THE CLOWN WHO GETS STUCK WITH *CLEANIN' UP!*

BEEP BEEP!

HUH?

WOULDN'T YA ***KNOW*** IT? JUST WHEN A GUY'S GOT HIS ***HANDS*** FULL...

...THERE'S GOTTA BE SOMEBODY AT THE ***DOOR!***

SECONDS LATER...

WHATEVER IT IS, IT'D BETTER BE ***GOOD,*** BUB.

WE WANT YOU DOORMEN JOKERS TA ***SCREEN*** VISITORS, NOT BUZZ US FER EVERY BUM WHO COMES IN OFF THE ***STREET!***

BAXTER

ORDINARILY, I WOULDN'T HAVE ***DIS-TURBED*** YOU, MR. GRIMM...

...IT'S JUST THAT HE SAID HIS NAME WAS ***BRUCE BANNER,*** AND THAT REED RICHARDS WAS ***EXPECTING*** HIM.

I REMEMBERED YOU'D SEEN A BRUCE BANNER ***BEFORE****, AND I THOUGHT--

TALK HERE

YA THOUGHT ***RIGHT,*** PAL.

BANNER'S A ***FRIEND.*** SEND 'IM UP--***PRONTO.***

****IN HULK #122.--ROY.***

AND SO...

GRIMM! GOOD LORD, MAN...

ALL THESE MONTHS, I NEVER ***HOPED...***

...NEVER DARED ***DREAM*** I'D FINALLY...

HEY, BANNER, TAKE IT ***EASY.*** YA LOOK KINDA OFF YER ***FEED...***

IF YA DON'T ***WATCH OUT,*** YOU'LL...

AW, NUTS.

YOU'VE REALLY HAD IT ***ROUGH,*** HAVEN'T YA, PAL?

DON'T ***SWEAT*** IT. FROM NOW ON, THING'S BE ***OKAY.***

THAT'S A ***PROMISE.***

WHEN BANNER COMES TO AGAIN FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER, IT SEEMS AT FIRST TO BE A DREAM...BUT SLOWLY, **REALITY** SEEPS IN...AND WITH IT, A QUIET **GRATITUDE**...

BEN, I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO **THANK** YOU...

TAKING ME IN LIKE THIS, KNOWING WHAT I CAN **BECOME**...!

FERGIT IT, MISTER.

GUYS LIKE US'VE GOTTA STICK **TOGETHER.**

YA WANT SOME **JAVA?**

COFFEE? I COULD **USE** SOME. IT'S BEEN WEEKS SINCE--**WHAT?**

THAT MACHINE--IS THAT ALL IT **DOES?**

BREW **COFFEE?**

DON'T LOOK AT **ME,** BANNER--IT'S ONE'A **STRETCHO'S** DOHICKEYS.

HE'S ALWAYS BUILDIN' THINGA-MABOBS--YA SHOULD SEE THE **REST** OF THE KITCHEN.

REED RICHARDS **IS** A BRILLIANT MAN.

I WAS HOPING HE COULD **HELP** ME...

...SOMEHOW **CURE** ME OF BEING **THE HULK**...!

YEAH, I **FIGGERED** IT WUZ SUMTHIN' LIKE THAT.

ME, I'VE HAD THE SAME **KINDA** HOPE FER YEARS NOW.

EVERY MONTH HE COMES UP WITH SOME **NEW** GIZMO...

...LIKE THIS GADGET HE WORKED UP LAST WEEK, A **PSI-AMPLIFIER** OR **SUMTHIN'** LIKE THAT.

ANOTHER BUST...LIKE ALL THE **OTHERS.** I WISH YA **LUCK,** BANNER.

ME, I--

DID YOU SAY--

PSI-AMPLIFIER?

BEN, IT'S JUST **POSSIBLE** REED AND I HAVE **DUPLICATED** OUR THINKING...

...ARRIVED AT THE **SAME** CONCLUSION FROM TWO DIFFERENT **DIRECTIONS.** AND IF WE **HAVE**...

...THEN IT **COULD** MEAN SALVA-TION FOR **BOTH** OF US.!

ARE YOU SAYIN' WHAT I **THINK** YOU'RE SAYIN'?

THIS **MACHINE** REED BUILT--WHERE IS IT? I **MUST** SEE IT.!

IF I CAN **REWIRE** IT, MAKE CERTAIN **ADJUSTMENTS**--!

BUDDY, IT'S RIGHT THIS **WAY!**

FOR A MAN OF ROBERT BRUCE BANNER'S **GENIUS,** ANALYZING AND REBUILDING A DEVICE OF INCREDIBLE DELICACY IS ALMOST **CHILDS-PLAY.**

THAT'S WHY, ONLY **EIGHT HOURS** AFTER HIS ARRIVAL AT THE BAXTER BUILDING, BRUCE BANNER IS ABLE TO SAY--

IN JUST **FORTY SECONDS,** YOU'LL BE FREE OF THE **THING**--AND I, OF THE **HULK**--

FOREVER!

BANNER, YA AINT GOT ANY **IDEA** HOW LONG I'VE BEEN WAITIN' FER SOMEBODY TA **SAY** THAT.

IF I DIDN'T THINK YA'D GET THE WRONG **IDEA,** I COULD **KISS** YA!

DO ME A **FAVOR,** THOUGH--TELL ME WHAT I'M **DOIN'** IN THIS **STRAIT-JACKET,** WILLYA?

IT'S **SIMPLE,** BEN-- **RELATIVELY.**

WE'RE FILLED WITH **RADIATION,** YOU AND I--THE COSMIC RAYS WHICH MADE YOU **THE THING,** THE GAMMA RAYS WHICH CHANGE ME INTO **THE HULK--!**

I'VE REWIRED REED'S MACHINE TO **TRANSFER** OUR RESPECTIVE ENERGIES IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY'LL **CANCEL EACH OTHER OUT--**

--SO **NEITHER** OF US CAN BE AFFECTED BY THEM **AGAIN!**

I GET IT.

WE'RE GONNA ACT LIKE **LIGHTNIN' RODS** FER EACH OTHER, RIGHT?

IN A **WAY.**

NOW, BEN-- HOLD YOUR **BREATH--**

I'M GOING TO **ACTIVATE** THE MACHINE--

NOW!

EEEEEEEYOWWW!

KWLAK!

BUT, IN THE NEXT INSTANT, THE **TENSION** OF THE PAST HOURS TAKES ITS TRAGIC **TOLL...**

NO! NOT **NOW**--NOT WHEN I'M SO **CLOSE!**

AND, FOR THE **THOUSANDTH** NIGHTMARISH TIME, THE **CHANGE** BEGINS...

NOT WHEN-- I'M SO **CLOSE**--

--SO PAINFULLY-- CLOSE--!

...THE CHANGE WHICH TRANSFORMS A GENTLE **NUCLEAR PHYSICIST** INTO THE RAMPAGING **BRUTE** MEN CALL...

...THE HULK!

BANNER--SOMETHING'S *WRONG!* THIS GIZMO'S DRAININ' US *TOO FAST*--

--THERE'S TOO MUCH BLASTED *POWER* COMIN' IN--IT'S LIKE A *HURRICANE* IN HERE--!

BANNER, CAN YA *HEAR* ME? WE'RE GONNA--

--*EXPLODE!*

BACHOOM!

IT'S THE *F.F.!* THEY'VE BLOWN THEMSELVES OFF THE *MAP*-- JUST LIKE THE DAILY BUGLE ALWAYS *SAID* THEY WOULD!

SHADDUP AND GET OUTTA MY *WAY,* BUB!

MAYBE *YOU* WANNA GET HIT BY FALLING *BRICKS*--ME, I'M GETTING *OUTTA* HERE!

THE FANTASTIC FOUR-- THE VERY ONES I CAME HERE TO *MEET* WITH!

IF *HE* IS DEAD, THEN MY MISSION IS *FINISHED!* BUT HE *CAN'T* BE-- HE *CAN'T!* *

*EVERYONE HERE REMEMBER *THUNDRA,* FROM ISSUES #128-29, & #133.? --R.T.

*M*EANWHILE, THIRTY-FOUR STORIES *ABOVE* STREET-LEVEL, AS THE ION-CHARGED *SMOKE* BEGINS TO CLEAR, A STUNNED FIGURE RISES TO TREMBLING *LEGS,* AND...

I-I'VE *CHANGED*... I CAN *FEEL* IT!

BUT--SOMETHIN'S GONE *CRAZY*... I AINT *BEN GRIMM*... AND I AINT *THE THING*...

...I'M THE *HULK!*

IT TAKES BEN GRIMM SEVERAL MOMENTS TO FULLY **COMPREHEND** THE MEANING OF WHAT'S TRANSPIRED; AND EVEN WHEN HE DOES, HE STILL CAN'T COMPLETELY **BELIEVE** WHAT HE SEES BEFORE HIM...

SOMEHOW THAT COCKEYED MACHINE SWITCHED OUR **MINDS!** THE THING'S BRAIN IS IN THE HULK'S **BODY**--

AN' BRUCE BANNER'S --IS IN **THE THING'S!**

WAIT-- ASECOND! WHAT IF IT **AINT** BANNER'S MIND!?

WHAT IF IT'S--

BWHUMP!

I WUZ **AFRAID** OF THAT! IT AINT BANNER WEARIN' MY BOD-- IT'S **GREENSKIN**--

--AND BROTHER, HE'S **MAD!**

HULK DOESN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S **HAPPENED**--BUT HULK **KNOWS** YOU!

HULK SEES YOU IN **DREAMS!** YOU'RE HULK'S **ENEMY**--! HULK WILL **SMASH** YOU--

HULK WILL MAKE YOU DIE!

AND IF THIS SEEMS LIKE A HECKUVA NOTE TO END **CHAPTER ONE** ON, WAIT'LL YOU SEE HOW WE START OFF **CHAPTER TWO**, ON THE PAGE FOLLOWING, FRANTIC ONE--!

"SOMEONE'S BEEN SLEEPING IN MY HEAD"

CHAPTER 2

HIGH OVER MANHATTAN ISLAND, A STREAK OF **FLAME** BURNS THROUGH THE CRISP, SMOG-LADEN AIR...MARKING THE TRAIL OF THE F.F.'S **YOUNGEST** MEMBER, JOHNNY STORM... **THE HUMAN TORCH!**

NOW **THIS** IS WHAT I CALL **LIVING!**

TO BE **FREE,** COMPLETELY FREE--IT'S ENOUGH TO MAKE A GUY FORGET **EVERYTHING:** GIRL FRIENDS, PROBLEMS AT HOME, THE LATEST NUTTY **VILLAIN**--

WHO **CARES** ABOUT ALL THAT JUNK, WHEN YOU CAN **FLY**--AND BE **FREE?**

IT SEEMS JOHNNY'S TIRED OF TESTING THIS NEW MODEL YOU RECEIVED FROM THE ***BLACK PANTHER,*** REED!

HE'S FLYING ON AHEAD TO THE ***BAXTER BUILDING.*** I HOPE HE AND BEN DON'T GET INTO ***ANOTHER*** BATTLE...THEY'VE ONLY JUST BECOME FRIENDS AGAIN AFTER THE ***LAST*** ONE.

JOHNNY'S ***IMPULSIVE,*** MEDUSA. HE AND BEN HAVE THAT TRAIT IN ***COMMON.***

FRANKLY, THOUGH, I'M ***WORRIED*** ABOUT HIM. IT'S BEEN ***MONTHS*** SINCE HE AND CRYSTAL BROKE UP--

--AND HE ***STILL*** HASN'T FOUND A NEW GIRL.

I'M AFRAID HE MAY BE ***BROODING...***

...AND IF THERE'S ONE THING WHICH CAN ***DESTROY*** A MAN...IT'S BEING UNABLE TO FORGET...A ***WOMAN.***

REED RICHARDS... YOU ***HYPOCRITE!***

YOU TALK ABOUT BEING UNABLE TO ***FORGET...***

...AND AREN'T ***YOU*** AS GUILTY AS ***HE*** IS? HAVE ***YOU*** MANAGED TO FORGET ***SUE?***

HOW ***CAN*** I, MEDUSA? THERE'S A ***DIFFERENCE.***

CRYSTAL WAS ONLY JOHNNY'S ***GIRL FRIEND.***

SUE WAS MY WIFE.

JUST THEN, FAR AHEAD OF THE SPEEDING SUPER-VEHICLE...

I'M SURPRISED ***BENJY*** DIDN'T WANT TO COME ON REED'S ALL NIGHT ***TEST RUN.*** A GUY WITH BEN'S INTEREST IN ***FLYING*** SHOULD HAVE--

WHAT IN--? I DON'T BELIEVE IT!

"ON THE ROOF OF THE **BAXTER BUILDING!**

"IT'S **BEN**--MY ORANGE-SKINNED BUDDY--**FIGHTING THE HULK!**"

WHAM!

TRUE, JOHNNY...BUT NOT **QUITE** THE WAY YOU THINK, FOR IN **THIS** CASE, AS IN **MOST** CASES... APPEARANCES ARE ALL **TOO** DECEIVING!

DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, OR WHAT YOU **WANT** FROM HULK--BUT HULK KNOWS YOU ARE HIS **ENEMY.**

SO **FIGHT,** UGLY MAN. FIGHT HULK! HULK WILL SHOW YOU--

--THE MADDER HULK GETS, THE **STRONGER** HE GETS--

AND HULK IS **STRONGEST** OF ALL!

STUNNED, NOT **CERTAIN** HOW TO HANDLE THE BODY HE'S FOUND HIMSELF IN, THE THING IS UNABLE TO FULLY **UTILIZE** HIS OWN VASTER **BULK,** HIS SLIGHTLY GREATER **STRENGTH--**

AND SO, BEN GRIMM FALLS **EASY PREY** TO THE HULK'S BLIND **RAGE--**

YES, FALLS...IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE!

NOW WHADDA I DO?

I'VE GOT MAYBE TEN SECONDS TA COME UP WITH A WAY OUTTA THIS-- THEN IT'S SPLAT-TIME!

RRRR

GOTTA BREAK MY FALL SOMEHOW...IF I GRAB HOLD'A THE BUILDING, TEAR INTA IT JUST A BIT...

...I JUST MIGHT MAKE IT... IN ONE PIECE!

NATURALLY, THE REAL HULK WOULDN'T HAVE HAD THIS PROBLEM--KNOWING, AS HE DOES, THE CAPACITY OF HIS LEGS TO CATCH HIS WEIGHT--!

BUT BEN GRIMM ISN'T THE HULK--

A FACT OF WHICH THE WOMAN CALLED THUNDRA ISN'T AWARE!

GOTTA CATCH MY BREATH... WORK THINGS OUT!

BLAST IT, I AINT HAD TIME TA THINK--I'VE GOTTA--

COWARDLY MALE!

IF YOU'VE HARMED GRIMM, I'LL TEAR YOU APART--

--WITH MY BARE HANDS!

WHAT IS THIS-- REUNION DAY?

BUT, JUST AS THE TRANSFORMED THING IS ABOUT TO MAKE A HASTY EXPLANATION...

CRUMP!

MORE ENEMIES! HULK IS SICK OF THEM!

YOU TRY TO HELP HULK'S ENEMY, TALL MAN...

...AND THAT MAKES YOU HIS FRIEND...

...SO HULK WILL HIT YOU TOO!

POW!

HUH? TALL MAN IS NOT A MAN AFTER ALL! HULK HIT GIRL!

YOU!

YOU ARE HULK'S ENEMY! YOU MADE HULK HIT THE GIRL--

NOW HULK WILL MAKE YOU PAY!

BUDDY, HAVE YOU GOT YOUR MARBLES SCREWED UP!

UP TA NOW, I'VE BEEN LETTIN' YOU DO ALL THE SLUGGIN'--

--I FIGGER IT'S TIME I STARTED SLUGGIN' BACK!

YOU'RE STRONG...

ALMOST AS STRONG AS THE HULK!

HOW DID YOU GET SO STRONG, UGLY MAN?

TELL HULK **NOW**-- BEFORE HE **SMASHES** YOU!

BAM!

BEN GRIMM DOESN'T **ANSWER:** INSTEAD, HE **RETURNS** HIS FOE'S BLOW...AND FOR THE FIRST **REAL** TIME, THEY BATTLE IN **EARNEST**...

BUNT!

...A BATTLE **BOTH** ARE DETERMINED NOT TO LOSE...

...BUT OF WHICH THERE CAN BE ONLY **ONE WINNER!**

MINUTES PASS IN A **BLUR** AS THEY TRADE PUNCHES; EACH BLOW SENDING THEM **REELING** THROUGH THE STREETS...

SPLOW!!!

UNTIL, AT LAST, THEY **PAUSE** OUTSIDE THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY BUILDING, AS BEN GRIMM MAKES ONE **FINAL** EFFORT TO COMMUNICATE...

...AND SEEING THAT THE HULK **REFUSES** TO LISTEN... IS, IN FACT, **UNABLE** TO LISTEN...

...HE STRIKES HIS MOST FATEFUL BLOW!

BADOOM!

HOLY COW! I KNOCKED 'IM RIGHT THROUGH THE SIDEWALK!

--AN' RIGHT INTA THE PATH OF THAT TRAIN!

YA JERK, DON'TCHA SEE WHAT'S HAPPENIN'? WE GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE--OR WE'LL BE FLATTENED!

MOVE, YA BLAMMED MORON!

WE'RE GONNA GET KILLED!

MARVEL TIME PARADOX NO. 74:

THIS IS WHERE WE CUT BACK IN TIME, TO A POINT THREE MINUTES PAST...

...AS THE TORCH ARRIVES BEFORE THE BAXTER BUILDING, AND...

THERE'S ONE OF THEM NOW!

HEY, YOU-- STORM! GET DOWN HERE! MOVE!

WHAT'S THE TROUBLE, OFFICER--? OUR LANDLORD GIVING YOU A PIECE OF HIS MIND?

DON'T WORRY ABOUT HIM, TORCH.

EVER HEAR OF A THING CALLED "DISTURBING THE PEACE"?

BAXTE

THAT'S RIGHT, OFFICER--

--ARREST THIS TROUBLE-MAKING WEIRDO.

THAT'S ALL THE EXCUSE I'LL NEED TO BREAK REED RICHARDS' LEASE--AND DE-RENT CONTROL HIS ENTIRE TOWER COMPLEX--

--SO I CAN START MAKING MONEY ON THIS BUILDING--

--WHICH IS WHAT I WANTED TO DO WHEN I BOUGHT IT IN THE FIRST PLACE!

GREAT. FOR THIS I HAD TO LOSE TRACK OF BEN AND THE HULK.

FORGIVE ME IF I'M RUDE, OFFICER. I'M SURE YOU'LL BOTH UNDERSTAND WHAT I MEAN WHEN I SAY--

DO ME A FAVOR-- BUZZ OFF!

MARVEL TIME PARADOX NO. 74 CONTINUED:

THOUGH THE **TORCH** HAS LOST OUR TWO BATTLING STARS, **THUNDRA** HAS NOT, AND HAS BEEN FOLLOWING THEIR PROGRESS THROUGH THE CITY BY TRACKING THE VIBRATIONS OF THEIR **STRUGGLE...**

...AND AT LAST THOSE VIBRATIONS HAVE LED HER ...**HERE.**

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN!

THEY'RE ONLY BLOCKS FROM 34TH STREET...THEY'LL **REACH** IT IN A MATTER OF **MOMENTS...**

...OR **WOULD** HAVE, IF THUNDRA HADN'T REACHED THEM **FIRST!**

THE TIME IS **PAST** FOR PASSIVITY--

SKREEEEE-AAAAAGH!

ONCE MORE, I'LL TAKE AN **ACTIVE** HAND.

NO DOUBT, THE THING DIDN'T **UNDERSTAND** THAT I CAME TO OFFER HIM MY **AID.**

HE PROBABLY THOUGHT I MEANT TO **ATTACK** HIM, AS I HAVE **BEFORE.***

*SEE FF #133.--R.T.

BUT WHAT ELSE COULD I EXPECT--

--FROM A MERE **MAN?**

FIGHT, UGLY MAN... HIT HULK **BACK!**

HULK WILL **SHOW** YOU WHO IS MORE POWERFUL --HULK WILL SHOW **EVERY-ONE!**

BEHIND YA, HULK-- **THE TRAIN--** **UNNNHHH!**

TRAIN? **MORE** ENEMIES ATTACK HULK?

WHY WON'T THEY LEAVE HULK **ALONE**? WHY MUST THEY ALWAYS COME **AFTER** HIM?

OH MY LORD! **GET OUT OF THE WAY, MISTER--**

IN HEAVEN'S NAME, GET OUT OF THE WAY!

HULK WON'T MOVE FOR **YOU!**

HULK WON'T MOVE FOR **ANYONE!**

YOU STUPID **MAN!** YOU HAVEN'T THE **STRENGTH** TO STOP A SPEEDING TRAIN--

NOT BY YOURSELF!

GO AWAY, NOISY WOMAN--

HULK DOESN'T **NEED** YOU-- NOT NOW, NOT **EVER!**

SCREECH

BHWUMP!

AND, WHEN THE DUST HAS CLEARED, AND THE STUNNED TRAIN ENGINEER HAS EXTRICATED HIMSELF FROM THE WRECKAGE AND SCURRIED INTO THE DARKNESS...

YOU DIDN'T **LISTEN,** RED-HAIRED WOMAN!

HULK SAID--

--GO AWAY!

:UUNNNNHHH!:

WHAM!

SPECIAL NOTE: THE ENRAGED THING/HULK ONLY STRUCK THE **GROUND** THIS TIME, NOT **THUNDRA**--BUT THE **RESULT** IS THE SAME! --GUESS WHO?

MEANWHILE, ABOVE THE DISTURBANCE, BUT CERTAINLY NO LESS INVOLVED IN ITS OUTCOME...

JOHNNY! WE SAW YOUR SIGNAL.

WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG?

MEDUSA, REED-- YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THIS:

BUT FOLLOW ME!

AND MEANWHILE STILL, IN MADISON SQUARE GARDEN:

HOLY CRUD! IT'S THE HULK AND THE THING--

--SMASHING RIGHT UP THROUGH THE CENTER AISLE!

WHAT'S GOIN' ON? WHAT'S GOIN' ON?

HEY, JOEY-- YOU GOT A NEW MANAGER OR SUMTHIN'?

WHAT'RE YA TALKIN' ABOUT, A NEW MANAGER?

IF YOU AINT, I'M GETTIN' OUTTA HERE--

--'CAUSE THEN THOSE GUYS AINT NO PUBLICITY STUNT --THEY'RE FER REAL!

IT'S NOT HARD TO PANIC A CROWD, AS RABBLE-ROUSERS HAVE LEARNED IN THE PAST--

BUT FEW CROWDS HAVE BEEN PANICKED MORE EFFECTIVELY THAN THIS--

--OR MORE QUICKLY!

GOOD LORD, NO!

JOHNNY WASN'T KIDDING US, MEDUSA! BEN'S IN TROUBLE--

POSSIBLY THE BIGGEST TROUBLE OF HIS LIFE!

AND WITH THOSE WORDS, WE BRING YOU--

CHAPTER 3

...AND IN THIS CORNER: THE INCREDIBLE HULK!

WHAPO

IT ISN'T POSSIBLE! BEN'S BEATING HIM--

--THROUGH SHEER FURY!

AN' I CAN'T GET THIS CRUMMY BODY ORGANIZED TA FIGHT BACK!

:UNNNHH!: EVERY TIME I TRY TA YELL OUT, HE HITS ME IN THE MOUTH-- TOO DIZZY TA TALK, CAN'T--

DON'T ***SWEAT*** IT, BENJY... THE ***CAVALRY'S*** ARRIVED!

YOU'RE DOIN' ***REAL WELL,*** PARTNER, BUT WITH A LITTLE ***HELP*** YOU CAN--

SWOP

JOHNNY, ARE YOU ***ALL RIGHT?***

THE WAY BEN STRUCK YOU--IF HE'D CONNECTED MORE ***SOLIDLY,*** HE'D HAVE SNAPPED YOUR ***BACK!***

I'LL BE OKAY... REED..

JUST...CAN'T FIGURE WHY HE'D ***HIT*** ME... MY OLD BUDDY...WHY HE'D...UHHHH...

JOHNNY'S ***PASSED OUT,*** MEDUSA.

I DON'T ***UNDERSTAND*** IT. BEN KNOCKED HIM ASIDE AS THOUGH ***JOHNNY*** WERE A THREAT--A ***DANGER!***

THERE'S SOMETHING ***WRONG*** HERE --SOMETHING ***DEAD*** WRONG!

EXIT

REED, ***LOOK!*** THE HULK'S BACK ON HIS ***FEET...***

REED, ***STOP!*** HIM!

KAPOW!

IF HE KEEPS FIGHTING, HE'LL ***KILL*** BEN! HE'S ***TOO STRONG!***

WILL HE, MEDUSA? I DON'T THINK SO! THE WAY HE'S USING HIS STRENGTH-- AS THOUGH HE WERE ACCUSTOMED TO LESS POWER, LESS SHEER ENERGY--!

I THINK I'M BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND, THOUGH THE LORD KNOWS HOW IT HAPPENED--!

THUD!

YOU'RE NOT MAKING SENSE! LOOK AT THEM--

THE HULK IS CRUSHING BEN! DESTROYING HIM!

FOR LONG MOMENTS, THE BATTLE CONTINUES, AND FROM INSTANT TO INSTANT, THE BALANCE SWAYS FROM ONE OPPONENT TO THE OTHER...NEITHER SPEAKING, THE TWO OF THEM TOO CAUGHT UP IN THE STRUGGLE TO DO MORE THAN GRUNT...AND SNARL LIKE WILD BEASTS...!

AND THROUGH IT ALL, REED RICHARDS WATCHES...

...AND EVENTUALLY... DECIDES.

I HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE.

I'LL HAVE TO ACT NOW, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.

IGNORING THE SOUNDS OF VIOLENCE, REED RICHARDS MOVES QUICKLY TO A SPOT NEAR RINGSIDE, WHERE HE FINDS AN ABANDONED FIRST AID KIT, KEPT ON HAND IN CASE A BOXER IS INJURED...

FIRST AID

HE FINDS WHAT HE NEEDS, MAKES A FEW ADJUSTMENTS...

...FILLS A SYRINGE WITH TRANQUILIZER...

...AND ACTS!

DON'T **WORRY,** BEN...I UNDERSTAND IT ALL **PERFECTLY** NOW.

ONCE I USE THIS, THE THREAT WILL BE **OVER...** AND THE HULK WILL BE **FINISHED,** FOR THE TIME **BEING** AT LEAST!

STAND **FIRM,** OLD FRIEND. I PROMISE--

I WON'T LET YOU **DOWN!**

OH NO, REED-- **NO!**

COULDN'T **TELL** YA-- COULDN'T GET IT OUT IN **TIME--!**

YA DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'VE **DONE,** STRETCH--

YA DON'T KNOW--WHAT YOU'VE DONE--

AND FOR THE FOLLOWING TEN SECONDS... THERE IS **SILENCE.**

BUT, WHEN OUR THREE CONSCIOUS HEROES REGAIN THEIR **TONGUES**...

WHA' **HAPPENED**? I'M **ME**, MY EVER-LOVIN' BLUE-EYED **SELF** AGAIN!

THEN YA **DID** REALIZE WHAT WUZ GOIN' ON, STRETCH--AN' SOMEHOW YA MANAGED A **REVERSE-SWITCH!**

REED RICHARDS, WOULD YOU KINDLY EXPLAIN THE **MEANING** OF ALL THIS?

I'M SURPRISED YOU DIDN'T FIGURE IT OUT FOR **YOURSELF**, MEDUSA.

TO SAY THE LEAST, BEN WASN'T ACTING **HIMSELF.** HITTING JOHNNY--ATTACKING "THE HULK" LIKE A **MANIAC**--

COUPLE THAT WITH MY KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT MY **PSI-AMPLIFIER** COULD DO, ADD A LITTLE EDUCATED **GUESSWORK** --AND IT WASN'T **DIFFICULT** TO ARRIVE AT THE CORRECT **ANSWER.**

ONCE I REALIZED THE TRUTH, THE SOLUTION WAS **SIMPLE:** CHANGE "THE HULK" BACK INTO **BANNER**, AND THAT WOULD **FORCE** BEN'S MIND INTO HIS PROPER **BODY**--

--WHICH, FORTUNATELY, IT **DID.**

NOW ALL WE NEED TO DO IS-- **EH?**

BEN-- LOOK OUT!!

TREACHEROUS CUR!

I OFFER YOU **AID**-- AND YOU RETURN IT WITH **PERFIDY!** NOT ONCE-- BUT **TWICE!**

ANY THOUGHT I MAY HAVE HAD OF RECONCILIATION-- **IS ENDED!**

BAPO!

HUH? HEY, WHAT **IS** THIS--**DUMP-ON-THE-THING DAY?**

WHOA, BEN.

I'VE GOT A GOOD **MIND** TA--

THUNDRA DOESN'T **UNDER-STAND** WHAT HAPPENED HERE, REMEMBER?

AS FAR AS **SHE** KNOWS, **YOU** WERE THE ONE WHO HIT HER... SO YOU'RE THE ONE WHO HAS TO **APOLOGIZE.**

APOLOGI--? TO **THAT** CRAZY DAME?!

YA **KNOW** SUMTHIN', STRETCH?

SOME DAYS IT JUST DON'T **PAY** TA GET OUTTA **BED.**

NEXT: **SPIDER-MAN!**

IN THE BEGINNING...

A SELF-INDULGENT SERMONETTE FROM *ROY THOMAS,* 33-YEAR-OLD AND AGING BOY EDITOR

I don't know about *you,* friend, but *I've* been waiting a long time for the first issue of a comic-mag like GIANT-SIZE SUPER-STARS!

No, not just since Marvel's highly successful Summer Specials went on sale in mid-1973 —

And not just since last-minute economic considerations forced us to abandon the idea of a regular line of 52-page titles back in July 1971, after a one-month run of over-size epics —

In fact, not even just since the halcyon days of exuberant epics the likes of FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL #1 in 1963, or the SPIDEY ANNUAL that debuted the next year —

—But ever since the last of the regularly-published 52-page comic-books vanished from the magazine racks and corner drugstores of America back in the early 1950's!

It's not that I have anything against our 36-page mags, of course. After all, these form the very foundation of the Mighty Marvel Empire (which consists roughly of three assistant editors Indian-wrestling over a paper-clip).

It's just that I distinctly remember bemoaning the shrinkage in the number of pages back in those long-ago days. I recall wondering, silently but plaintively, why somebody didn't *ask* me whether I'd rather have a 36-page comic at the *price* I was used to — or whether I'd rather save my precious pennies (I was ten or eleven at the time) and purchase a mag that was the same *size* I was used to.

Myself, I was a *size* man. (When you're ten or eleven and you're the shortest kid in a class of twelve, you tend to get that way.)

So now, thru the courtesy of the Marvel Comics Group (ta ta ta TAAAA ta ta!), you lucky souls are getting the chance I never got — the chance to vote, in effect, on the size of comic-mag you want to see the most of. If enough of you pick up this and future issues of GIANT-SIZE SUPER-STARS, then you'll be telling us that you want to see *more* such 35¢ thrillers, with their unique combination of stories, pin-ups, and special features—and we're not gonna be too shy about complying!

And, just in case there's any doubt about the size Ye Editor will be rootin' for . . . !

* * * *

And now, a few words about the munificent new mag you hold in your hands:

Okay, so maybe it's just a wee bit unwieldy. So what were we gonna call it — LOTSA PAGES FOR 35¢, or maybe REALLY BIG SHEW COMICS?

And so maybe you're planning on getting even with Stan and me by referring to it solely as "that 35¢ FANTASTIC FOUR book," huh?

Better not.

'Cause it's *not* just the fabulous F.F. that'll be appearing in this new once-a-month masterwork!

Recently, in a long (and doubtless long-winded) conference, Smilin' Stan (the last name's Lee) and I were discussing the ways and means of introducing a line of 52-page comic-mags with a bang. We wanted to turn out an issue every thirty days — but without replacing (or competing unduly with) our regular titles. Finally, after much palavering back and forth, somebody — it was probably Stan; that's his *job,* y'know — figured it'd be best to take a cue from the recent spate of *rotating series* on the ever-lovin' boob tube.

If CBS can get plenty of mileage out of Colombo and McCloud and MacMillan and Wife in the same time slot on alternate weeks, then why couldn't mind-boggling Marvel likewise have three of *our* most popular series alternate in one mag, so that each feature would appear in four (count 'em, four) giant-size mags a year?

No reason at all!

For good and profound reasons (which I forget at the moment), we decided we'd kick the new mag off with no less than *The Fantastic Four,* who spearheaded Marvel's mirthful march toward magnificence 'way back in summer of '61. (I know; I was there.) And, since our wall-crawling wonder, *Spider-Man,* is stronger than dirt and twice as popular, he was a sure bet to headline its *second* issue. Then, since *Conan the Barbarian* was one of the few top Marvel stars not currently appearing in *two* mags, we figured what the hey — we'd make him the *third* member of our comic-book constellation.

After the third issue? Well, just like the TV boys, we'll start all over again — providing we can remember by then in what order we used our harassed heroes, that is.

So there (or rather, *here)* you have it: GIANT-SIZE SUPER-STARS #1, featuring the FANTASTIC FOUR!

And, since we've pledged to ourselves and to Marveldom Assembled to do our dead-level best to make each issue of SUPER-STARS a real *spectacular* in every sense of the word, we unleashed Merry Gerry Conway and Rich (Swash) Buckler to see if they could concoct the most brain-blasting Thing/Hulk battle of all time! Ger and Rich responded by *switching minds* on our twin titans, so

that you can barely tell your super-stars without a scorecard! (If *then!)* What's more, just for good measure, Rich asked if he could depict ol' Greenskin more or less in the same style in which he appeared in the first few issues of his own mag, 'way back in 1962-63—hairy chest and all—and quite frankly I didn't have heart to say him nay!

Hope you dig "The Mind of the Monster" as much as *I* did when I first read it. If you did—then you had yourself a *ball,* buddy.

And *after* this issue?

Well, around the end of March, the gods and Gil Kane willing, you'll be seeing your friendly neighborhood *Spider-Man* battling a terror-striking team composed of none other than *Morbius, the Living Vampire* (one of Spidey's most popular foes of all), and the mysteriously menacing *Man-Wolf* (who in reality is the mild-mannered astronaut son of ill-mannered J. Jonah Jameson, right?). It's the tag-team match that's been planned ever since Gerry, John Romita, and I first dreamed up the concept of John Jameson, boy werewolf, in a Bullpen brainstorming session a couple of years back. (You didn't think I talked about Conan *all* the time, did you?)

And, *speaking* of Conan . . .

SUPER-STARS #3, on sale in late April, will herald the first part of a much-requested, long-demanded adaptation by the aforementioned Mr. Kane and Yours Truly of *The Hour of the Dragon* (a.k.a. *Conan the Conqueror),* the only full-length novel by Robert E. Howard, creator of the sullen Cimmerian. That—plus twelve Conan color mags — plus the imminent return (believe it or don't) of our 75¢ SAVAGE TALES title, with art by the likes of Barry Smith and others — should erase any last, lingering doubts as to the ever-burgeoning popularity of the most successful sword-and-sorcery feature in the history of comics.

Blush, blush.

* * * *

Okay, I've said my piece about GIANT-SIZE SUPER-STARS, present and future. Now, you say yours.

We want to know what you *like* about the mag, the format, the size, everything.

We want to know what you *didn't* like — and *why* — and how you think it could be improved. (Short of giving it away free in Wheaties boxes, that is.)

And, most of all, we'd like to hear suggestions from one and all as to features and special pages you'd like to see included in future issues, whether they star the F.F., Spidey, or Conan. Would you rather see a collectors'-item classic instead of our continuing gallery of super-foes with its invaluable new checklist?) Do you want to see biographies, crossword puzzles, quickie quizzes, highlights of our heroes' greatest moments?

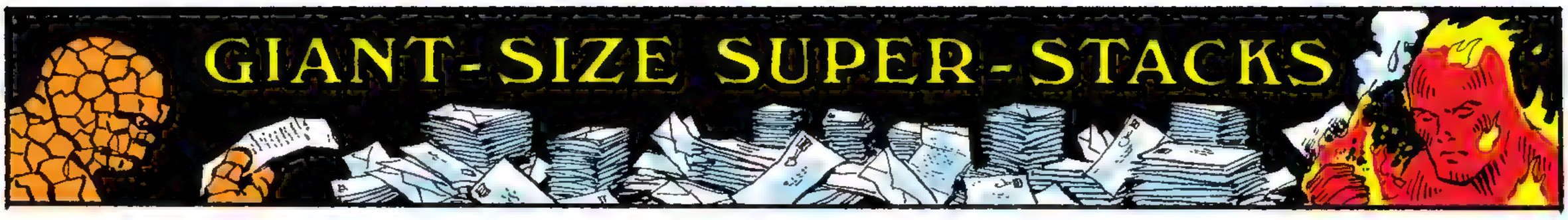
Frankly, the only thing we're *sure* of is that neither of us wants to see a bunch of *blank pages!*

So *write,* okay?

The address is:

GIANT-SIZE SUPER-STARS
Marvel Comics Group
575 Madison Avenue, 6th Floor
New York, N.Y. 10022

As somebody used to say — Excelsior!



Don't look now, effendi, but this is Ye Editor again — shamelessly commandeering what will be, in future issues, *your* letters page — to wallow in a wee bit of nostalgia for a few hundred words.

Since this is the *first* issue of GIANT-SIZE SUPER-STARS, and since it stars the *first* superheroes of what soon became and remains the Marvel Age of Comics, he (that is, *I*) thought it might be permissible to follow the yellow brick road back to that wonderful year *1961:* the *last* year for many centuries whose number looks the same upside-down and right-side-up; the *last* year that the expression "The Thing" meant nothing but either an old Hit Parade tune by Phil Harris or a garden-variety Frankenstein played by James Arness; the *first* year in quite a few that anything *new* had happened to the comic-book field.

Namely, of course, that's the year when FANTASTIC FOUR #1 went on sale.

A spanking-new *magna cum laude* college grad in those lazy hazy days of summer, I was also officially the assistant editor of something called ALTER-EGO, a superhero-oriented fan-magazine started by my college-prof friend Dr. Jerry Bails (and which I'm still trying to find time to publish). Well sir, Jerry had recently asked me for contributions to a *second* fanzine he was starting, an ad-oriented publication called THE COMICOLLECTOR, where comics fans could buy, sell, and trade to their hearts' content — and he wanted an extra feature or two to fill out the first issue. This was in August 1961.

So, when I saw this weird thing called THE FANTASTIC FOUR on sale at my favorite magazine store, I promptly picked up two copies, read them unbelievingly, then rushed home and dashed off a few deathless (?) comments about that strange new comic-mag.

And, since the odds are that you weren't among the hundred or so people who received COMICOLLECTOR #1, and since Smilin' Stan Lee is saving everything that's *really* worth printing for that still-upcoming MARVEL ORIGINS BOOK, here's a word-for-word reprinting of what just may be the very first superhero-comic review ever to appear in a fanzine — complete with cryptic references to (a) Carl Burgos, who first wrote and drew the original Human Torch, back in 1939; (b) a deservedly-forgotten Z-grade hero called the Purple Claw, who somehow looked better to me then; and (c) Canam Publishers Sales Corporation, one of the many reasons why you can be glad we changed our name to Marvel.

Anyway, here goes nothing:

FOUR OF A KIND

A Review of FANTASTIC FOUR #1

By Roy Thomas

It was bound to happen! The *Human Torch* is back, flaming his way across the heavens, scorching everything which stands in his fiery path.

But wait — something new has been added. For, *this* Human Torch is a blond-haired *teenager* whose major interest in life, when he's not setting fire to USAF jets, is tinkering with hot-rods! And he's not *alone,* for with him are three other, new super-heroes: his sister, the *Invisible Girl,* who fades in and out of sight with alarming irregularity; the group's leader, *Mr. Fantastic,* who possesses the ability to stretch to an amazing variety of sizes and shapes; and, to top it all off, *The Thing,* endowed with tremendous physical strength which he (it?) generally uses for good, but looking like a monstrous cross between a walking boulder and a Gila monster!

Yes, these are THE FANTASTIC FOUR, heroes of a new comic put out bi-monthly by Canam Publishers Sales Corporation. Produced by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby (of the old-time Simon and Kirby team, which originated Captain America, the Guardian, Stuntman, Challengers of the Unknown, and many others), this comic stands somewhere between the Challengers and the new Justice League of America.

Despite its faults — and this first issue has some glaring ones — THE FANTASTIC FOUR holds promise of becoming one of the better comics now on the stands, in this reviewer's opinion. Especially gratifying is the re-revival of the Torch, undoubtedly one of the most interesting super-hero ideas of all time. The Four's leader, Mr. Fantastic, is also a welcome character, as appearances by Elongated Man in *The Flash* have so far been too spotty to be satisfying.

The *really* outstanding feature of this comic, however — which somehow seems more like a mag of the 40's than of the 60's — is the hero known as *The Thing!* Not since The Heap ran rampant in the old *Airboy Comics* a decade or more ago has there been such a frightening champion of justice. Perhaps the readers of *this* comic era — who do not appear to like some of the old ideas — will not take kindly to such an unlikely hero; but I sincerely hope that they do, for something is needed in a period of all-too-handsome supermen to remind us that goodness of heart and an attractive physical appearance are not necessarily synonymous.

Unfortunately, this first issue also leaves a lot to be desired. Invisible Girl's power, apparently unsupplemented by the ability to walk thru walls, etc., is such that her role is a minor one; the three humans wear drab clothing that would never really stand the rigors of a monster-filled adventure such as this first one; Mr. Fantastic's stretching power (like that of Elongated Man) is still too limited for him to be considered the true successor of Plastic Man or a great one in his own right; and, worst of all, the drawing of this third version of the *Human Torch* is almost pathetic in many panels, *crying* for a return to something like the old Burgos version.

It is too early yet to judge fully THE FANTASTIC FOUR, but I, for one, cast my vote in favor of them. With a little imagination both in stories and artwork — plus perhaps the addition of a fifth character, such as the Sub-Mariner or someone like the old Purple Claw — I think this comic would be worthy of a large circulation. One interesting aspect of this comic — are you listening, Don Thompson? — is that The Thing is a rather rebellious creature who is often at the point of fighting to the death with the leader, Mr. Fantastic, and is, to say the least, extremely contemptuous of his leadership. This feature alone, especially if and when the Torch begins to get in on this running feud, would make it well worth any super-hero fan's dime.

However, ALTER-EGO would like to hear from others who have read the first issue, or who purchased the second issue, which will hit the stands the first week in October. We'd like to hear what other comics fans think of THE FANTASTIC FOUR, its good and bad points. Who knows—this reviewer may have been the only person who bought a copy!

Hmmm. Well, that wasn't *too* bad, was it?

I was wrong, of course, in thinking that—because of the slam-bang approach of Stan and Jack to the origin of the F.F.—the mag would herald a return to things past. What it *really* did, naturally, was to combine what was best in the comics of my misspent youth — like action and excitement — with a new sophistication and sensitivity that were not to become apparent for a few issues. THE FANTASTIC FOUR and its several successors, in short, were to make comics *fun to read* again—and that's what it's really all about, isn't it?

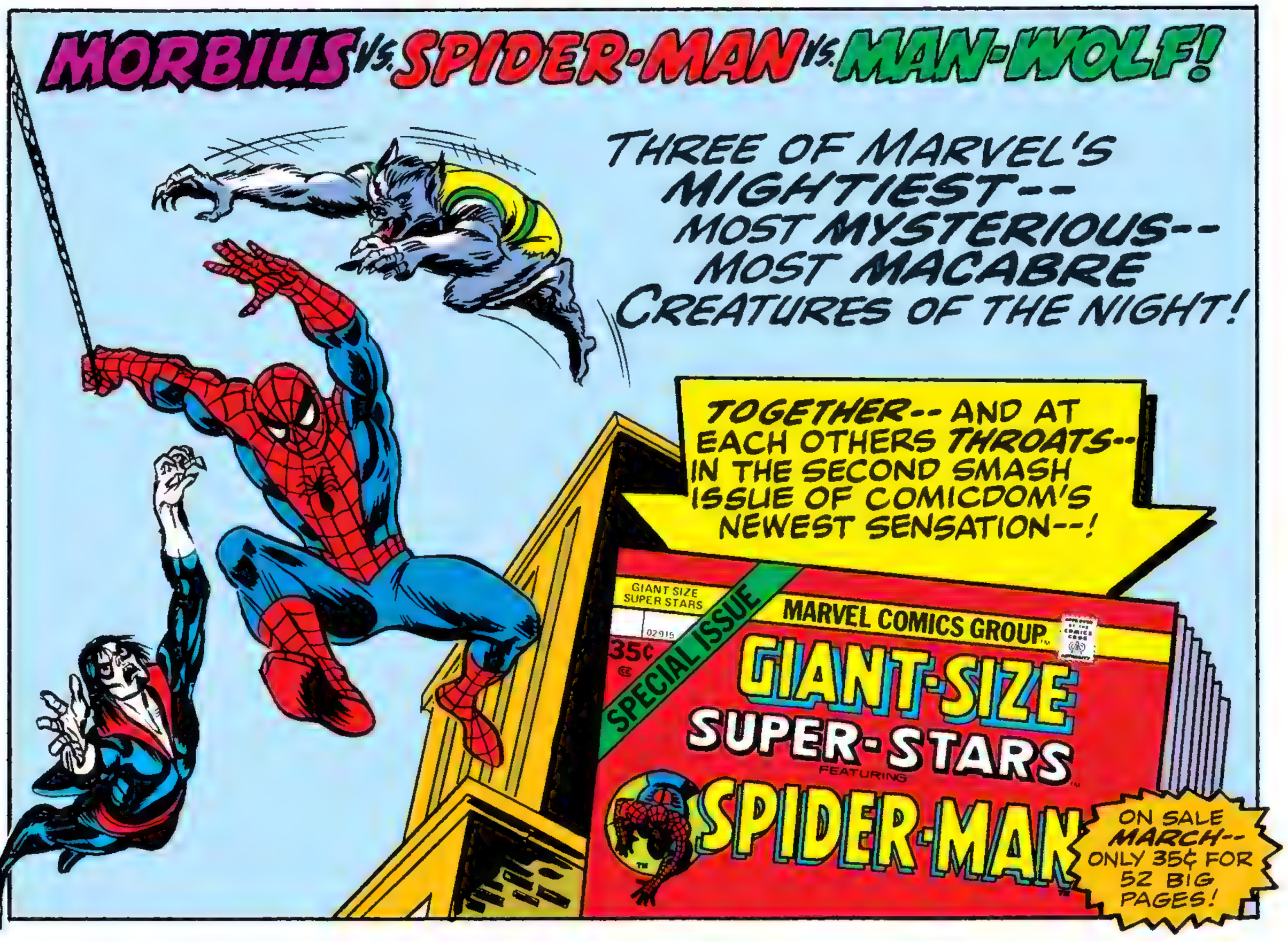
And, despite me, the Thing was *not* destined merely to become a retread of the Heap of another day, nor was Reed Richards slated to be a pale imitation of an earlier hero, but a more serious, even scholarly superhero in his own right.

Still, I got a *few* things straight: By the third issue, the Torch was drawn in an acceptable-to-Roy-Thomas form (though one I couldn't resist monkeying with a bit, when I took over scripting and editing the mag some years later)—*and* the garrulous little group had donned *costumes,* in answer to many more voices than my own. While the savage Sub-Mariner, of course, had wing-footed his wondrous way into the mag, though hardly because he wished to sign up! What's more, some issues later, Sue Storm was even to gain those extra powers I craved—powers which made her a more vital, viable member of the team.

One thing I'm glad about: I definitely *wasn't* the only person who bought a copy of F.F. #1!

My only regret: When I look at comic-book dealers' lists, and see that collectors'-item issue selling for up to $50 and more, I wish I'd bought out the whole blamed *rackful!*

NEXT MONTH: THE REAL SCOOP (NO LIE!) ABOUT SPIDER-MAN!



FANTASTIC FOUR

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

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NOW, MORE THAN EVER-- THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

FANTASTIC FOUR®

SUE RICHARDS IS MINE-- TILL THE DAY I DIE!

MISTER, YOU JUST SAID THE MAGIC WORDS!

THIS IS THE BIG ONE! THE THING BATTLES A FIGHTING-MAD SUB-MARINER --AND IT'S WINNER TAKE ALL!

BUCKLER & SINNOTT

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

GERRY CONWAY * WRITER
RICH BUCKLER * ARTIST
JOE SINNOTT * EMBELLISHER
ARTIE SIMEK, LETTERER * L. LESSMANN, COLORIST
ROY THOMAS * EDITOR

THE SUB-MARINER STRIKES!

THINGS WUZ PRETTY BAD WHEN I WENT TA BRING BACK **YOU** GUYS--FLYIN' HALF-WAY 'ROUND THE BLASTED **WORLD** TA FIND YA--

--JUST IN **TIME**, TOO, THE WAY YOU WUZ MIXIN' IT UP WITH THOSE **SNOWMEN** JOKERS!*

BUT THE WAY YOU **SPOKE** --WE NEVER DREAMED IT'D BE LIKE **THIS!**

LADY, NEITHER DID **I.** REED WAS IN THE **DUMPS,** ALL RIGHT, AND WHO **WOULDN'T** BE?

WHEN A GUY'S **WIFE** TAKES OFF--YA DON'T EXACTLY START **CHEERIN',** EVEN AFTER A FEW **MONTHS**--

*LAST ISSUE. --ROY.

--BUT I FIGGERED IF YOU CAME BACK AN' **TALKED** TA HIM, MAYBE-- **HUH?**

SUMMONS - **DIVORCE** COURT

IT'S A **SUMMONS.** SUE'S STARTED **DIVORCE PROCEEDINGS** AGAINST REED...!

JOHNNY, THAT'S **INCREDIBLE!** ARE YOU **SURE?**

LADY, I CAN **READ.**

LITTLE **SUZIE,** ASKIN' FER A DIVORCE? I DON'T **BELIEVE** IT.'

*STUNNED, THE THREE FRIENDS REACT WITH VARYING DEGREES OF **AMAZEMENT**...RANGING FROM JOHNNY STORM'S GAPING **DISBELIEF,** TO MEDUSA'S REFLEXIVE **COMPASSION,** TO BENJAMIN GRIMM'S SLOWLY BUILDING **RAGE**...

REED, I'M SO **SORRY**...IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO, ANYTHING AT **ALL**...

SIS HAS ACTED PRETTY **STRANGE** LATELY, BUT I NEVER EXPECTED SOMETHING LIKE **THIS!**

OF ALL THE CRUMMY, LOW-DOWN THINGS TA **DO**--THIS TAKES THE **CAKE!**

BEN...WAIT.' SHE'S PERFECTLY WITHIN HER **RIGHTS**...IF THIS IS WHAT SHE WANTS, THEN...

...WHO AM I TO STAND IN HER **WAY.?**

YOU'RE HER BLAMED **HUSBAND,** THAT'S **WHO!**

AND IF NONE'A **YOU** CLOWNS WANTS TA DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT--

I **WILL!**

AFTER A BRIEF **DISCUSSION.** MEDUSA ELECTS TO REMAIN WITH REED, WHILE THE **YOUNGEST** MEMBER OF THE FABULOUS FOURSOME DECIDES TO--

--GO **WITH** YOU, BEN, TO KEEP THAT UGLY MUG OF YOURS OUT OF **TROUBLE.**

AFTER ALL, SUE **IS** MY SISTER, AND FRANKLIN'S MY **NEPHEW,** SO IF ANYONE SHOULD TALK TO HER--IT'S **ME.**

YA MEAN, "IT'S **I.**"

DON'T FERGIT WHO'S **SIDE** YER ON, KIDDO...

SUZIE MAY BE YER **SISTER,** BUT REED'S YER **FRIEND.**

SEEMS TO ME I CAN REMEMBER A TIME WHEN YOU WERE AS ANGRY WITH HIM AS **I** WAS, THING.*

IS THAT ALL IN THE **PAST?**

YA BETTER **BELIEVE** IT, HOT-HEAD.

WHEN THE CHIPS'RE DOWN, A MAN'S **GOTTA** STICK WITH HIS PALS.

*FF#'S, 142-144. --R.T.

EVEN WHEN THEY MAY BE IN THE **WRONG?**

UNDERSTAND ME, BEN--I DON'T THINK SUE'S **RIGHT** IN FILING FOR DIVORCE--BUT SHE SURE HAS A GOOD **REASON.**

ANYWAY, I FEEL LIKE FLYING ON **AHEAD** FOR A WHILE--YOU MIND?

NAH. DO WHAT YA **WANT,** TORCH. ME, I'VE GOT SOME **THINKIN'** TA DO.

MAINLY, IS TORCHY **RIGHT?** MAYBE SUE **HAS** GOT A GOOD REASON...

LOST IN THOUGHT, THE MAN CALLED **THE THING** FOLLOWS JOHNNY STORM'S FIRE-TRAIL **MECHANICALLY,** NOT NOTICING THE MILES PASSING BENEATH HIM, NOT SEEING THE UNFOLDING PENNSYLVANIA **COUNTRYSIDE,** UNAWARE OF **ANYTHING,** UNTIL...

HUH? WHAT THE--?

SPLASH!

MANY ARE THE FOES BEN GRIMM HAS FACED IN THE YEARS SINCE HE BECAME THE **THING:** THE MOLE MAN, DOCTOR DOOM, ANNIHILUS, BLAASTAR--EACH MORE **POWERFUL** THAN THE REST IN HIS OWN WAY, EACH A **DEADLY MENACE!**

YET, OF **ALL** THOSE FOES, THERE IS ONE WHOSE **FULL POWER** HAS NEVER BEEN TURNED UPON THE THING--WHOSE STRENGTH HAS NEVER BEEN **TESTED**--WHO REMAINS AN **ENIGMA,** NEITHER FULLY A FOE--NOR FULLY A **FRIEND.**

WHICH **MIGHT** SERVE TO EXPLAIN BEN GRIMM'S CONFUSION AS HE CRIES OUT--

NAMOR..
THE **SUB-MARINER!**

THAT'S *RIGHT,* THING... AND THOUGH AT THE MOMENT YOU AND I HAVE NO *QUARREL*...

WHAM!

...I MUST *STRIKE,* FOR MY HONOR *DEMANDS IT!*

SURRENDER *NOW,* THING. I HAVE NO DESIRE TO *HARM* YOU...

...THOUGH I MOST CERTAINLY *WILL,* IF YOU *PERSIST* IN YOUR CHOSEN COURSE OF *ACTION!*

ACTION?

BUDDY, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE *TALKIN'* ABOUT--

--BUT IF YA THINK YOU'RE GONNA ORDER THE *THING* AROUND--

--FISH-FACE, YA GOT ANOTHER THINK *COMIN'!!*

NOT *SO,* MY ORANGE-SKINNED FRIEND--

--IT IS *YOU* WHO MUST RECONSIDER, FOR IN THIS ELEMENT--*NAMOR* IS *SUPREME!*

HE'S *RIGHT!* EVEN IN A FRESH-WATER *LAKE,* WATER MAKES 'IM *STRONGER*--MAYBE EVEN STRONGER'N *ME!*

DON'T KNOW WHY HE'S *ATTACKIN'* LIKE THIS-- OR HOW HE GOT TA *PENNSYLVANIA*-- BUT RIGHT NOW, I DON'T *CARE!*

I GOTTA GET HIM BACK ON *LAND*-- OR I'VE *HAD IT!*

SPLOM!!!

CORRECT THAT-- *HAVE* HAD IT.!

NAMOR CAUGHT ME *OFF-GUARD*--KNOCKED THE BREATH OUTTA ME--! GONNA *BLACK OUT....!*

*AND SO, FOR THE **MOMENT** AT LEAST, BEN GRIMM TAKES THE BITTERNESS OF **DEFEAT**...*

*...BUT AS CONSCIOUSNESS **LEAVES** HIM...*

WITH THE THING DOWN, I MUST TURN TO *OTHER* MATTERS...

*...FOR, I SAW **TWO** MEMBERS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR APPROACHING... AND ONE OF THEM IS **THE HUMAN TORCH!***

YOU *SAID* IT, CREEP! ONE OF THEM *IS* THE HUMAN TORCH--

AND RIGHT NOW, HE'S *BURNING MAD!*

SO YOU *RETURN* FROM YOUR SCOUTING FORAY, JOHNNY STORM.

MUST I NOW DO BATTLE WITH *YOU* ALSO?

BELIEVE IT, NAMOR!

I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU WENT AFTER MY BUDDY *BEN*--

--BUT NOW YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO DEAL WITH *ME*-- AND FOR SOMEBODY WHO THRIVES ON *WATER* LIKE YOU DO--

--TANGLING WITH A WALL OF *FLAME* CAN MEAN *BIIIIGGG TROUBLE!*

INGENIOUS. YOU SEEK TO CUT ME OFF FROM THE *LAKE--!*

YOU'VE *MATURED* SINCE THE LAST TIME WE FOUGHT, STORM.

IT'S A PITY I *ANTICIPATED* A TRICK LIKE THIS, AND HAVE COME PREPARED WITH A WEAPON OF MY *OWN--*

AN ASBESTOS NET!

THEN YOU WERE *EXPECTING* US... YOU *WANTED* TO FIGHT US!

AFTER REED SAVED YOUR *LIFE**, YOU'VE TURNED ON THE FANTASTIC FOUR LIKE A CRUMMY SCALE-SKINNED *BENEDICT ARNOLD!*

I HAVE MY *REASONS,* TORCH--

WHY, MAN? WHY?

**SUB-MARINER #67. --RT.*

...WHAT I THINK ARE *VALID* REASONS.!

THERE CAN'T *BE* A VALID REASON FOR BETRAYAL, NAMOR.

YOU'RE EITHER *WITH* US--OR *AGAINST* US.!

UNTHINKING BUFFOON!

WHOMP!

YOU DARE SPEAK TO *NAMOR* IN *ABSOLUTES.?*

KNOW *THIS,* MY FLAMING FRIEND--

--NAMOR HAS NEVER TAKEN HIS LOYALTIES *LIGHTLY.*

NOR DOES HE TAKE THEM LIGHTLY *NOW.*

SPLASH!

IT'S NOT FOR *YOU* TO JUDGE ME, TORCH.

NO HUMAN MAN CAN JUDGE NAMOR, *PRINCE OF THE SEVEN SEAS!*

OH YEAH....?

THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE *WRONG,* POINTY-EARS.

LIKE I WUZ SAYIN' TA THE KID A LITTLE *WHILE* AGO--

A MAN'S GOTTA STICK WITH HIS *FRIENDS--*

--OTHERWISE, HE'S *NUTHIN'!*

UNHAND ME, YOU WITLESS *BABOON!*

SPRAK!

I SAID, HE'S *NUTHIN'!*

AN' IF YA DON'T *BELIEVE* THAT, FISH-MAN--

BUNT!

--THEN YOU'RE NUTHIN' TOO!

BOOM!

WHADDAYA KNOW? I MUST'A KNOCKED HIM INTA THE NEXT *COUNTY.*

C'MON, KID. WE'LL TRY'N FIGGER OUT WHAT THAT WATER-LOGGED BOZO WANTED *LATER,* AFTER WE'VE HAD OUR TALK WITH *SUZIE.*

THEN MAYBE WE CAN-- *HUH?*

FOOL!

DID YOU REALLY BELIEVE *ONE PUNCH* COULD DISPATCH THE *SUB-MARINER?*

HAD I THE TIME, I'D SHOW YOU JUST HOW *STRONG* I TRULY AM--

INSTEAD, I SHALL MERELY *WARN* YOU:

MAKE NO ATTEMPT TO *FIND* SUSAN RICHARDS OR HER CHILD...FOR I ASSURE YOU, THEY ARE NO LONGER YOUR *CONCERN...*

--*OR* THE CONCERN OF THE INFAMOUS *REED RICHARDS!*

FROM THIS MOMENT ON, THEY ARE UNDER *MY* PROTECTION, THE PROTECTION OF *NAMOR THE FIRST,* FORMER *PRINCE* OF LOST *ATLANTIS!*

THIS I SWEAR:

SUE RICHARDS IS MINE-- NOW, AND EVERMORE!

*F*OR SEVERAL SECONDS, NEITHER BEN NOR JOHNNY CAN *SPEAK;* THEY CAN ONLY *STARE* AT NAMOR'S RECEDING FORM, AND *REMEMBER* THAT HE WAS ONCE REED RICHARD'S GREATEST *RIVAL* FOR SUE STORM'S *AFFECTIONS.*

*F*INALLY, THE FULL *MEANING* OF NAMOR'S WORDS SINKS IN, GALVANIZING THE TWO FRIENDS INTO SWIFT AND SUDDEN *ACTION...!*

...WHICH LEADS THEM **HERE,** TO THE COUNTRY HOME OF BOB AND CAROL LINDERS, SUE RICHARD'S OLDEST **FRIENDS...**

ALRIGHT, WHERE **IS** SHE?

LITTLE SUZIE'S GOT SOME **EXPLAININ'** TA DO, AND--

WHAT'S GOIN' **ON?**

SHE'S NOT **HERE,** MR. GRIMM...THE SUB-MARINER'S **KIDNAPPED** HER!

BOTH SUE AND **FRANKLIN...** THEY'RE **GONE!**

NEITHER BOB NOR I THOUGHT SUE WAS DOING THE RIGHT THING WHEN SHE SENT REED THAT NOTICE FOR A **DIVORCE**-- BUT SHE WOULDN'T **LISTEN** TO US!

SHE'D GONE TO HER **ROOM**-- LOCKED HERSELF IN--

"--AND SUDDENLY WE HEARD **SOUNDS,** VOICES ARGUING--A MAN'S VOICE, AND SUE'S--AND THEN SHE **CRIED OUT!**

"WHEN WE BROKE IN, **HE** WAS HOLDING HER--

"--BUT, BEFORE **EITHER** OF US COULD REACT, HE **FLEW OFF**--

"--TAKING SUE **WITH HIM!**"

BUT--WHAT ABOUT FRANKLIN,? YOU SAID HE TOOK FRANKLIN **TOO?**

WE DON'T KNOW...HE'S SIMPLY **VANISHED.** WE ASSUMED...

BOB, IT'S **OUR** FAULT...IT'S **ALL** OUR FAULT. IF WE'D **BEEN** WITH HER, IF WE HADN'T **ARGUED...!**

EASY, HONEY.

HER **FRIENDS** WILL FIND HER--WON'T YOU, JOHNNY?

FRANKLY, BOB...

...RIGHT NOW I'M NOT TOO **SURE...!**

CUT TO:

NEW YORK'S FAMOUS **BAXTER BUILDING**, EXACTLY THREE HOURS AND TWENTY-FIVE MINUTES **LATER:**

REMIND ME TA THANK THAT **STATE TROOPER**, TORCHIE.

...IF IT HADN'T BEEN FER HIM, WE'D STILL BE THUMBIN' A RIDE ON THE **NEW JERSEY TURNPIKE!**

BEN, THIS IS **SERIOUS.**

YA THINK I DON'T **KNOW** THAT?

FER THE PAST **THREE HOURS**, I'VE BEEN TRYIN' TA FIGURE HOW TA BREAK THE NEWS TA **STRETCH...**

...AN' NO MATTER HOW I CUT IT, IT AINT GONNA BE **EASY.**

BETTER LET **ME** DO IT, KID...

"...REED AN' I GO BACK A **LONG TIME...**"

BUT, INSTEAD OF THE MOROSE, WITHDRAWN REED RICHARDS THE THING **EXPECTS** TO SEE, HE FINDS...

HE'S BACK AT WORK ON ONE'A HIS **GIZMOS**--LIKE NUTHIN'S **HAPPENED!**

I JUST CAN'T **FIGURE** THE GUY...I **CAN'T!**

BEN... DON'T **DISTURB** HIM. IT TOOK ME FOUR HOURS TO GET HIS MIND OFF **SUE...**

WHATEVER IT IS YOU APPARENTLY WANT TO **TELL** HIM...CAN'T IT WAIT TILL **TOMORROW?**

I WISH IT **COULD.**

HE'S GOTTA HEAR IT **NOW...**

...NO MATTER **HOW** MUCH IT'S GONNA HURT HIM!

HEY, STRETCH... I GOT SOME **BAD NEWS.** IT'S ABOUT **SUE...**

SUE?

YOU'VE **TALKED** TO HER?

I'LL GIVE IT TO YA **STRAIGHT:**

REED, SHE'S BEEN TAKEN **CAPTIVE...**

...BY THE **SUB-MARINER!**

SOME MEN REACT TO TRAGEDY BY **COLLAPSING;** OTHER MEN FIND **STRENGTH** IN THEIR GRIEF, AND SO THROW THEMSELVES INTO THEIR WORK WITH **RENEWED ENERGY;** REED RICHARDS IS ONE OF THE **LATTER** MEN...

THUS, LESS THAN FIVE HOURS AFTER LEARNING ABOUT HIS WIFE'S **ABDUCTION,** HE HAS ARRANGED MATTERS WITH INCREDIBLE **SPEED**...TO AN END NOT EVEN HIS CLOSEST **FRIEND** CAN GUESS!

ARE YA GONNA TELL US WHAT THAT KING-SIZE ***WINKY-DINK MAGIC SCREEN*** IS FOR--

--OR ARE YA GONNA KEEP US IN SUSPENSE TILL WE ***CROAK?***

YOU'LL FIND OUT ***SOON ENOUGH,*** GRIMM. YOU'LL ***ALL*** FIND OUT.

IN THE MEANTIME, IF YOU CAN TEAR YOUR EYES ***AWAY*** FROM IT LONG ENOUGH-- BRING ME THE PORTABLE ***MENTO-SCAN DEVICE*** FROM MY AUXILIARY LAB.

IT'S TIME I SET CERTAIN WHEELS IN ***MOTION.***

THERE. THE DEVICE IS ***MONITORING*** THE RADIATION BAND ENVELOPING THE EARTH -- SEEKING OUT ONE ***PARTICULAR*** RADIATED FREQUENCY--

--THE FREQUENCY EMITTED BY NAMOR'S ***COSTUME!***

WHAT? HOW'S ***THAT*** AGAIN, HIGH POCKETS?

YOU ***DO*** REMEMBER THAT I DESIGNED NAMOR'S PROTECTIVE ***UNIFORM,*** DON'T YOU, GRIMM?*

BECAUSE THAT SUIT WAS STRUCTURED TO KEEP THE SUB-MARINER ***ALIVE,*** IT POSSESSES CERTAIN ***ATTRIBUTES...***

...ATTRIBUTES I CAN ***TRACE...***

*ONCE AGAIN, SUB-MARINER #67. --R.T.

...AND BY PINPOINTING THAT PECULIAR ***RADIATION,*** I CAN PINPOINT NAMOR'S ***WHEREABOUTS*** AS WELL!

SO!

HE'S ***THERE,*** IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC, SIX HUNDRED MILES OFF THE AFRICAN ***COAST***-- AND THAT'S WHERE ***I*** PLAN TO BE TOMORROW MORNING, WITH OR ***WITHOUT*** YOU, FRIENDS.

IT'S WHAT I HAVE TO ***DO.***

ONE-FIFTY-FIVE AM: WITH A WHINE OF SCREAMING TURBINES, THE FABULOUS FANTASTI-CAR LIFTS INTO A LOWERING MANHATTAN SKY, BEGINNING A TEN-HOUR JOURNEY TO THE SOUTH ATLANTIC...

SIX THIRTY-TWO AM: ALREADY, HALF THE DISTANCE HAS BEEN COVERED, AND THE THOUGHTS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR TURN INWARD...

...AND THEY WONDER HOW THIS BATTLE WILL END...

ELEVEN FORTY-ONE AM: AT LAST, THE FANTASTI-CAR DIPS DOWN-WARD: THE SEA RUSHES UP; THE FINAL DRAMA IS ABOUT TO BEGIN.

BEN, MEDUSA, JOHNNY--TAKE THOSE OXY-PILLS I'VE GIVEN YOU.

THEY'LL PROVIDE ENOUGH OXYGEN TO YOUR BLOOD-STREAM FOR AN HOUR'S WORTH OF ACTIVITY BELOW.

AND, JOHNNY--THAT HEAT-FRAME YOU'RE WEARING SHOULD ALLOW YOU TO FLAME ON ONCE WE'RE UNDERWATER.

YOU'RE THE SCIENTIST, BROTHER-IN-LAW.

AND LISTEN--I'M GLAD YOU SOUND LIKE YOU'RE YOUR-SELF AGAIN.

YOU WERE CHEW-ING US UP PRETTY BAD BACK IN NEW YORK, YOU KNOW.

I REALIZE THAT NOW, JOHNNY.

NO MATTER HOW STRONG A MAN MAY THINK HE IS--SOMETIMES THE PRESSURE CAN GET TO HIM.

NOW BRACE YOUR-SELVES--

--WE'RE GOING UNDER!

SPOOM!

REED'S RELEASING THE TWO SCOUT-MODULES.

FOR THE MOMENT, IT'S UP TO JOHNNY AND BEN!

BINGO! STRETCH HIT THE JACKPOT FIRST TRY!

EITHER I'M A BLASTED YANCY STREETER, OR THAT'S--

THE SUB-MARINER!

HE'S BUILT HIMSELF SOME SORTA **FORTRESS** DOWN HERE...LIKE ONE'A REED'S GIANT **WHATSIWHOSISES!** NO SIGN OF **SUZIE** AROUND, OR EVEN OF ANY'A NAMOR'S **ATLANTEANS** *--WHICH DOESN'T MEAN A **THING**, WHEN YA COME RIGHT **DOWN** TA IT!

THE WAY HE'S **GLARIN'** AT US, SUBBY AINT EXACTLY HAPPY WE'VE **COME VISITIN'**--

--AND AINT THAT JUST TOO CRYIN' **BAD?!?**

*THAT'S BECAUSE **MOST** OF NAMOR'S SUBJECTS ARE **DEAD**, STRANGLED BY THE SAME **NERVE GAS** WHICH ALMOST KILLED **NAMOR**--AND NOW FORCES HIM TO WEAR THE **COSTUME** REED RICHARDS DESIGNED, WHICH ALLOWS THE SUB-MARINER TO BREATHE OUT OF **WATER!** --SHORT-OF-BREATH ROY.

THIS IS GOING TO BE *INTERESTING.*

NONE OF US CAN *TALK* DOWN HERE--EXCEPT *NAMOR!*

WONDER HOW THAT'LL AFFECT THE *FIGHT--*

--IF IT AFFECTS IT AT *ALL!*

ONE THING'S CERTAIN, I'M GOING TO MISS SHOUTING *EPITHETS--*

SUCH AS: *WATCH OUT, NAMOR--WE'RE COMIN' THROUGH!*

YOU MUST HAVE AN EXTREMELY LOW *OPINION* OF ME, JOHNNY STORM--TO THINK TO *HARM* ME WITH SUCH AN EASILY-AVOIDED *TRICK!*

YOU'LL HAVE TO DO MUCH *BETTER* WHEN OUR BATTLE BEGINS IN *EARNEST!*

SKRANG!

THINK YOU'RE PRETTY *COOL,* DON'T YOU, NAMOR?

LET'S SEE HOW YOU *KEEP* YOUR COOL WHEN THINGS START GETTING *HOT--*

FLAME ON!

AN AMUSING *GESTURE,* STORM--

--BUT I BELIEVE THE *TRUE* THREAT COMES FROM *THIS* DIRECTION--

BEN GRIMM, THE THING!

YOU **GUESSED** IT, GILL-JAWS. I NEVER **DID** TRUST YOU, NOT WHEN TORCHIE FIRST **FOUND** YA AFTER ALL THE YEARS YA SPENT WITHOUT YER **MEMORY***...

...AND **ESPECIALLY** NOT LATER, WHEN YA TRIED TA TAKE **SUE** AWAY FROM MY OLD COLLEGE-BUDDY, **REED!**

SO YA CAN **GUESS** WHAT I THINK OF YA **NOW,** CREEPO!

*FF#4, HISTORY LOVERS!--R.T.

EVEN IF YA CAN'T **HEAR** ME--

--I'LL BET YA KNOW WHAT I'M **THINKING!**

UNNNNNHHH!

YEAH, I GUESS YA **DO,** AT **THAT!**

BA-BOOM!

BEN ISN'T **HURT,** HE'S ONLY **DISORIENTED**...AND JOHNNY ISN'T **CERTAIN** HOW TO MANAGE HIS FLAME **UNDERWATER!**

THAT LEAVES THIS BATTLE TO **ME**--

--WHICH IS PRETTY MUCH HOW I **WANT** IT!

SO, REED RICHARDS... YOU SIGNAL YOUR FRIENDS TO **BACK AWAY.**

IT'S TO BE A BATTLE BETWEEN THE **TWO** OF US, IS IT?

I HOPE YOU ENJOY IT, AS **I** WILL!

IF REED WANTS TA FACE OFF WITH NAMOR, THAT'S FINE BY *ME.*

I FIGGER *ONE* OF US SHOULD LOOK AROUND SUBBY'S *FORTRESS--*

*"--AN' SINCE REED'S BUSY BEIN' **ENRAGED,** IT LOOKS LIKE I'M **ELECTED!***

*"GO **TO** IT, OLD BUDDY...!*

*"GIVE HIM ONE FER **ME!**"*

THROOM

KRASH

YOU *SURPRISE* ME, REED RICHARDS. YOUR RAGE IS *UNFEIGNED*--YOUR HATRED, ALL TOO *REAL!*

TELL ME...WHICH ANGERS YOU *MORE:* THAT YOUR WIFE IS IN MY *POWER...*

...OR THE KNOWLEDGE THAT IT'S *YOU* WHO HAVE *FAILED* HER...

...*YOU* WHO BETRAYED HER WIFELY *TRUST!*

OR MUST I *REMIND* YOU, RICHARDS, HOW YOU TURNED A WEAPON ON YOUR *OWN CHILD--*

--AND BLASTED HIM INTO A BRAIN-STUNNING *COMA!**

**FF #141. --R.T.*

WHAT'S *WRONG,* RICHARDS?

ARE YOU *STILL* UNABLE TO FACE THE *TRUTH...?*

"THE **TRUTH:** THAT YOU DROVE YOUR WIFE **AWAY**--RIGHT INTO MY **ARMS!**"

BUT, ONLY **REED** HEARS THE SUB-MARINER'S CRUEL WORDS; BEN GRIMM, FOR EXAMPLE, IS SEVERAL HUNDRED YARDS **DISTANT,** IN A SECTION OF THE FORTRESS PRESSURIZED AND FULL OF **AIR...**

...FULL OF **OTHER** THINGS, AS WELL!

WHOOM!

SHEESH! IT'S GETTING TA BE, EVERY TIME A JOKER TURNS **AROUND,** THERE'S AN **ANDROID GUARD** STANDIN' IN HIS WAY!

FRANKLY, BUB--

I AINT **IMPRESSED!**

SPANG!

A FEW MORE STEPS; AN OPEN **AIRLOCK,** AND THEN...

SUZIE!

C'MON, KID--LET'S BREAK **OUTTA** THIS JOINT.

WITH **YOU** BACK IN THE GROUP, THERE AINT A GOON IN THIS TINKER-TOY THAT CAN **STOP** US!

BEN, **NO!** YOU DON'T **UNDERSTAND!**

WE CAN'T LET THEM GO ON **FIGHTING** LIKE THIS... YOU HAVE TO **GET** TO THEM...GET TO **REED...**

YOU'VE ALL MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE!

BUT, OUTSIDE...

HE'S *FREEING* HIMSELF-- MY HAIR CAN'T *HOLD* HIM!

BLAST! WE'RE MAKING A *BOTCH* OF THIS-- SOMEHOW, WE CAN'T GET FUNCTIONING AS A *TEAM!*

IT'S NOT BEING ABLE TO *TALK*-- WE END UP WORKING AT *CROSS-PURPOSES!*

WE'D BETTER GET ON THE STICK *SOON,* OR ELSE--

KHOOM!

FORGET THE "OR ELSE"! IT'S ALREADY *HAPPENING...*

THE SUB-MARINER'S *BEATING* US... *AND WE CAN'T STOP HIM!*

*BEFORE JOHNNY CAN STRUGGLE TO **REKINDLE** HIS DOUSED FLAME, HOWEVER, A **NEW** ELEMENT ENTERS THE FRAY, IN THE FORM OF..*

SUSAN!

GRIMM, IF YOU'VE *HARMED* HER IN ANY WAY, I SWEAR YOU'LL--

*NAMOR, **DON'T!** THEY DON'T **KNOW,** I HAVEN'T **TOLD** THEM--!*

THEN PERHAPS YOU *SHOULD.*

I DON'T SEEM TO HAVE MADE IT *CLEAR.*

NAMOR DIDN'T *KIDNAP* ME; HE ASKED ME TO GO *WITH* HIM...

...AND I *DID.*

*YOU SEE, REED... IT'S SOMETHING I'VE ALWAYS **SUSPECTED** ...AND NOW KNOW TO BE **TRUE:***

*I **LOVE** THE SUB-MARINER, AND I'M GOING TO STAY WITH HIM... **FOREVER!***

NEXT ISSUE: *SURPRISES GALORE, OLD VILLAINS, OLD FRIENDS, IN A STORY TITLED:* **The F.F. at WAR!**

FANTASTIC FOUR

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

FANTASTIC FOUR®

TM

WIZARD! THUNDRA! SANDMAN! TRAPSTER!

THE FRIGHTFUL FOUR STRIKE AGAIN!

BUCKLER
SINNOTT

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR! ™

GERRY CONWAY *WRITER* * RICH BUCKLER *ARTIST* * JOE SINNOTT *INKER* * ARTIE SIMEK, *LETTERER* L. LESSMANN, *COLORIST* * ROY THOMAS *EDITOR*

BEN! WHAT'S HAPPENING TO US? WE'RE LOSING ALTITUDE--GOING INTO A POWER DIVE!

IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE FANTASTI-CAR? ARE THE CONTROLS JAMMED, OR--?

IT AINT THE CONTROLS, MEDUSA-- IT'S REED!

FER A MINUTE BACK THERE, IT WUZ LIKE HE PASSED OUT AT THE WHEEL--BUT DON'T YOU WORRY, LITTLE LADY--

AND AS THOUGH OUR FABULOUS FOURSOME DON'T HAVE PROBLEMS ENOUGH, THEY'LL SOON HAVE TO DEAL WITH--

THE EVER-LOVIN' BLUE-EYED THING IS GONNA BRING THIS BABY DOWN LIGHT AS A FEATHER!

WATCH OUT, TORCHIE-- HERE WE COME!

WAR ON THE THIRTY-SIXTH FLOOR!

TAKE IT EASY *YOURSELF,* BENJY.

REMEMBER-- YOU'RE NOT A *FIGHTER JET PILOT* ANYMORE!

PLEASE, JOHNNY... DON'T DISTRACT BEN WHILE HE'S *LANDING.*

OUR LANDLORD WOULDN'T *APPROVE* IF WE DESTROYED HIS *ROOF,* YOU KNOW.

AW, WHO *CARES* ABOUT THE BAXTER BUILDING, *ANYWAY?*

AFTER WHAT HAPPENED WITH *SUE,* I'M NOT SURE I *WANT* TO COME BACK TO THIS ULTRA-MODERN *MAUSO-LEUM.*

ALL IT DOES IS *REMIND* ME-- HOW THINGS *USED* TO BE.

*SOON, AFTER THE FANTASTI-CAR HAS **DOCKED** AT THE BASE OF ITS SPECIAL **HANGAR SHAFT,** AND FOUR WEARY FRIENDS HAVE FINISHED **DISEMBARKING...***

THE KID'S *RIGHT,* MEDUSA. THIS PLACE IS LIKE A *TOMB* WITHOUT SUZIE... ESPECIALLY NOW THAT WE KNOW SHE WON'T BE COMING BACK...*EVER.*

I DON'T *BLAME* STRETCHO FER GETTIN' A LITTLE FLAKEY UPSTAIRS...

'CAUSE IF ALICIA EVER LEFT *ME* FOR A JERK LIKE THE *SUB-MARINER,* I'D GET PRETTY FLAKEY, *TOO!**

**IT HAPPENED LAST ISSUE (MORE *LATER*). --R.T.*

LET'S DROP THE *SUBJECT,* BEN, SHALL WE?

AT THE MOMENT, ALL I WANT TO DO IS *FORGET--*

--AND SOMEHOW, IN SOME WAY, GET SOME *REST.*

I KNOW IF I DON'T FALL ASLEEP *SOON*--I MAY GO *MAD.*

*UNFORTUNATELY FOR THE EXHAUSTED LEADER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR, SLEEP WILL NOT BE SOON **FORTHCOMING**--*

FOR, THERE ARE **OTHER** MATTERS WHICH WILL DEMAND THE F.F.'S **ATTENTION**--

--MATTERS THAT **CAN'T** BE **IGNORED!**

SPUMP!

BY AGON'S GENES!

SOMETHING'S **ATTACKED** US FROM OUTSIDE THE **ELEVATOR!**

REED, CAN YOU SEE **WHAT**--?

WHAT--OR **WHOEVER** IT IS, HE'S MANAGED TO JAM THE **DOORS!**

WE'LL BE **TRAPPED** IN HERE, UNLESS--

I MADE IT!

THERE WAS AT LEAST A **QUARTER-INCH** OF SPACE BETWEEN THE DOORS-- JUST ENOUGH ROOM FOR ME TO SLIP THROUGH **BY** MAKING MYSELF **PAPER THIN!**

EVERYTHING'S HAPPENED SO **QUICKLY,** THE OTHERS HAVEN'T HAD TIME TO **REACT**--

--SO IT'LL BE UP TO **ME** TO FACE OUR UNKNOWN **ENEMY,** UNTIL THEY CAN-- **YOU!**

THE SANDMAN! WE ALWAYS **WONDERED** WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU--AND THE **REST** OF THE **FRIGHTFUL FOUR!** *

I'LL JUST **BET** YOU WONDERED, BRAIN BOY.

WELL, NOW YA **KNOW** --WE'VE BEEN HIDIN' OUT, PLANNIN' THIS **COME-BACK**--

*THEY DISAPPEARED AT THE END OF F.F. #136. --ROY.

--AND BUSTER, YOU AINT GONNA **STOP** US!

HE'S SHAPED A SAND **SLEDGE-HAMMER** OUT OF HIS **HAND**--IT'S ALL MOVING TOO **QUICKLY** FOR ME--I DON'T HAVE TIME TO **BRACE** MYSELF BEFORE--

UNNNHHH!

BA ROOM!

HE'S **FASTER** THAN THE LAST TIME I FOUGHT HIM--AND SOMEHOW, **STRONGER** AS WELL!

WHAM!

IT'S ALL I CAN DO TO **ROLL** WITH HIS PUNCH... I'M STILL TOO **WORN OUT** FROM BATTLING **NAMOR** ONLY A FEW HOURS AGO...!

IF THIS KEEPS UP... THE SANDMAN COULD **KILL ME!**

WHAT'S *WITH* YOU, RICHARDS,? YA AINT FIGHTIN' *BACK*--

YOU'RE JUST *LYING* THERE, TAKIN' IT LIKE A BLASTED *PUNCHIN' BAG!*

MAYBE YOU'RE TOO *GOOD* TA MIX WITH ME-- IS *THAT* IT,?

YEAH, YOU COLLEGE BUMS ARE ALL *ALIKE!* YA THINK YA KNOW *EVERY-THING,* JUST 'CAUSE YA GOT A PIECE OF PAPER WITH A *DEGREE* ON IT.

I GOT *NEWS* FER YA, FELLA--YOU KNOW *NUTHIN'!*

YA *GOT* ME,? I SAID, YOU KNOW--

--NUTH--

:*YEOWWW!*:

SPOW!

*A*ND, AT THAT PRECISE *INSTANT,* A FEW YARDS DOWN THE RUBBLE-STREWN *CORRIDOR...*

I DON'T CARE *WHAT* YA SAY, MEDUSA--!

I'VE HAD IT WITH *WAITIN'*--

HOMB!

--I'M COMIN' *THROUGH!*

RRRI

PPPP!

WELL, WHADDAYA *KNOW,?* IF IT AINT OUR OLD PAL, *THE SANDMAN!*

LOOKS LIKE REED COULD USE SOME *HELP,* RED. WHY DON'T YOU STICK WITH *HIM*--

--WHILE ME AN' THE TORCH FIND OUT WHAT SANDY'S *DOIN'* UP HERE!

AT ANY OTHER TIME, I'D TELL YOU HOW *CHAUVIN-ISTIC* YOU ARE, BEN GRIMM...

BUT AT THE MOMENT, I DON'T SUPPOSE IT REALLY *MATTERS.*

YOU *TELL* 'IM, MEDUSA. AND WHILE YOU'RE ALL CHEWIN' IT OVER AMONG *YERSELVES*--I'LL SORTA DROP OUTTA *SIGHT* FER A LITTLE WHILE--

--AS ONLY THE *SANDMAN* CAN!

BEN, JOHNNY--*STOP HIM!*

HE'S HEADING TOWARD--

--THE *AIR VENT.* WE *SEE* THAT, BROTHER-IN-LAW...BUT THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN *DO* ABOUT IT.

THE SANDMAN CAN TURN HIS ENTIRE *BODY* INTO SAND...

...JUST LIKE TORCHIE CAN TURN HIS ENTIRE *BODY* INTO FLAME...

THIRTY-SIX *FLOORS* IN THIS CRUMMY BUILDIN'--AND HE COULDA LET HIMSELF OUT ON *ANY* ONE OF 'EM--

"--AND THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN *REACH* 'IM--JUST NO WAY *AT ALL!*"

FINE. THAT'S *EXCELLENT.* SIMPLY *PERFECT.*

IF THE SANDMAN'S HERE, THAT CAN ONLY MEAN THE OTHER TWO REMAINING MEMBERS OF THE FRIGHTFUL FOUR ARE *ALSO* IN THE BAXTER BUILDING...

...AND WE JUST ALLOWED OUR ONLY LEAD TO THEIR LOCATION... TO *ESCAPE!*

BUT, REED--HOW COULD WE *STOP* HIM?

IN A THOUSAND DIFFERENT WAYS, JOHNNY--IF YOU'D BEEN *QUICK* ENOUGH, AND HAD THE NECESSARY *IMAGINATION.*

BUT WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO *DISCUSS* IT. IN EFFECT, THE SANDMAN HAS DECLARED *WAR*--

--AND *WE'VE* GOT TO GET READY--TO *FIGHT* IT!

A SHORT WHILE **LATER,** AS THE MEMBERS OF OUR FAVORITE FIGHTING TEAM SEPARATE, EACH TURNING TO HIS APPOINTED TASK, A QUIET JOHNNY STORM PADS THROUGH A DESERTED HALLWAY, THINKING GRIM THOUGHTS...

IT'S FUNNY, BUT I THINK REED IS ALMOST **GLAD** THE FRIGHTFUL FOUR HAVE CHOSEN THIS MOMENT TO **ATTACK.**

I SUPPOSE IT'LL GIVE HIM SOMETHING TO TAKE HIS MIND **OFF** SUE AND HIS SON...

...AND RIGHT ABOUT NOW, MY BEST BROTHER-IN-LAW **NEEDS** ALL THE DISTRACTION HE CAN **GET.**

WONDER HOW **I** WOULD FEEL, IF SOMEONE STOLE **MY** WIFE AWAY FROM ME?

HECK, SUE'S MY **SISTER**-- AND ISN'T THAT ALMOST AS **CLOSE** AS A WIFE?

AND WASN'T **I** MAD WHEN BEN AND I FOUND OUT--?

"WAS IT ONLY **YESTERDAY** THAT WE WERE HEADED TOWARD **PENNSYLVANIA,** TO THE FARM WHERE SUE WAS STAYING WITH FRIENDS--

"--ONLY TO BE ATTACKED BY **SUB-MARINER** BEFORE WE WERE HALF-WAY **THERE?**

"AFTER WE'D TANGLED INDECISIVELY WITH **HIM,** WE LEARNED THAT HE'D **KIDNAPPED** SUE--

"--AND A FEW HOURS LATER, REED, MEDUSA, BEN AND I TRACED NAMOR TO A HIDDEN UNDERWATER **BASE** OF HIS--

"--WHERE THE FOUR OF US **FOUGHT** THE SUB-MARINER, PRACTICALLY TO A **STAND-STILL**--

"--ONLY TO LEARN THAT WE'D BEEN **WRONG** ABOUT THE SITUATION FROM THE **WORD `GO.!'**

YOU DON'T **UNDER-STAND!** I **LOVE** NAMOR, AND I'M GOING TO STAY WITH HIM... **FOREVER!**

"YEAH, I GUESS **I'D** BE AS SHAKEN AS **REED...** AND MAYBE A LITTLE **HAPPY** I WAS ABOUT TO FACE...**THE FRIGHTFUL FOUR...!**"

BUT PERHAPS NOT **QUITE** SO HAPPY AS THE FRIGHTFUL FOUR ARE ABOUT FACING **YOU,** JOHNNY STORM...A HAPPINESS ALL TOO **APPARENT** IN THE EXPRESSIONS OF THE THREE DETERMINED MEN GATHERED HERE, ON A FLOOR SEVERAL LEVELS **BELOW** THE PENTHOUSE HEADQUARTERS SHARED BY THE F.F...

YOU LOOK LIKE THE CAT THAT'S JUST EATEN THE **CANARY,** SANDMAN.

IS IT ALL GOING ACCORDING TO **PLAN?**

JUST LIKE THE WIZARD **FIGGERED** IT, TRAPSTER.

WHAT ELSE DID YOU **EXPECT,** YOU MUSCLED **BUFFOON?**

WHEN IT COMES TO **STRATEGY**-- THE WIZARD HAS NO **PEER!**

IF THAT MEANS YOU THINK YOU'RE PRETTY **GOOD,** WIZARD--WELL, I'VE GOTTA **AGREE.**

SOME OF YOUR SCHEMES AINT ALWAYS **WORKED OUT**--BUT THEY DIDN'T FLOP 'CAUSE YOU DIDN'T **PLAN** 'EM WELL.

ONLY THING THAT BOTHERS **ME,** IS--

WHY ARE WE GIVIN' THOSE JOKERS A CHANCE AT **ALL?**

WHY DON'T WE JUST WIPE 'EM OUT **QUICK,** BEFORE THEY KNOW WHAT **HIT** 'EM?

PRECISELY BECAUSE THEY **WOULDN'T** "KNOW WHAT HIT THEM," MY IMBECILIC FRIEND.

RICHARDS AND THE OTHERS MUST BE MADE TO **SUFFER...** AND KNOW **WHY** THEY SUFFER...

ANY **OTHER** COURSE WOULD BE SIMPLE **SAVAGERY,** AND NOT WORTHY OF THE TALENTS OF THE **WINGLESS WIZARD.**

BUT YOU **KNOW** THE NEXT STEP, TRAPSTER... I HAVE ALREADY **SHORT-CIRCUITED** THE ENTIRE **WARNING ALERT SYSTEMS** THAT GUARD THEIR HEADQUARTERS!

THUS, LESS THAN THIRTY SECONDS **AFTER** THE WIZARD'S ABRUPT DEPARTURE...

...A SILENT FIGURE MOVES UP A DARK **STAIRWELL** PAST A FLOOR LEASED BY AN **ACCOUNTING FIRM...**

...AND INTO THE LAB-ROOM WHERE A THOUGHTFUL JOHNNY STORM SUDDENLY BECOMES AWARE THAT HE IS NOT ALONE!

SOMEONE--OPENING THE DOOR BEHIND ME!

THE OTHERS ARE BUSY IN REED'S LAB, SO WHO--?

UH-HUH. I THOUGHT SO.

LOOK, STORM, YOU AND ME GO WAY BACK, TO WHEN I WAS PASTE-POT PETE, BEFORE I BECAME THE TRAPSTER...

WHY DON'T YOU JUST MAKE IT EASY FOR BOTH OF US... AND SURRENDER NICE AN' QUIET?

FOR OLD TIMES' SAKE, OKAY?

SORRY, TRAPSTER--NO DEALS.

IF YOU KNOW ME AS WELL AS YOU APPARENTLY THINK YOU DO--YOU SHOULD KNOW I DON'T GIVE IN.

AND NOTHING YOU CAN DO--NONE OF YOUR TRAPS OR STREAMS OF PASTE --CAN MAKE ME!

THEN FLY, TORCHIE--

--BECAUSE WHETHER YOU WANT IT OR NOT, YOU'RE GONNA BE MINE!

WAIT! SOMETHING'S HAPPENING TO ME--

I'M LOSING CONTROL, CRASHING TOWARD THE FLOOR! AND THERE'S NO WAY I CAN STOP MYSELF!

FROOSH!

GOOD LORD, IT'S THE TORCH!

I-I ALWAYS KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN--

--EVER SINCE WE RENTED THIS OFFICE BELOW THEIR APARTMENTS, I-I KNEW--!

EVERYBODY STAY BACK, AND NOBODY'LL GET HURT.

THE TORCH HERE FORGOT SOMETHIN' ABOUT ME--NOT ALL MY TRAPS ARE VISIBLE.

SOME OF THEM CAN SNEAK UP ON A MAN...

...LIKE GAS!

MEANWHILE, ON A FLOOR TWO LEVELS ABOVE...

ARE YOU CERTAIN ABOUT THIS DEVICE OF YOURS, REED?

HOW CAN I BE, MEDUSA? I JUST RIGGED IT IN THE LAB--

--BUT IF IT DOES WORK, IT SHOULD HELP US TRACE THE FRIGHTFUL FOUR'S LOCATION, JUST AS I TRACED NAMOR TO HIS UNDERSEA LAIR!

IT WORKS ON THE SAME PRINCIPLE AS MY PSI-AMPLIFIER*..WITH IT, I CAN PINPOINT A PARTICULAR BRAIN-WAVE PATTERN, AND THUS...HOLD IT.

THE MACHINE'S GIVING ME A POSITIVE FEEDBACK! THAT CAN ONLY MEAN--

*SHOWN IN GIANT-SIZE SUPER-STARS # 1. --R.T.

YOU'VE FOUND ME, RICHARDS-- A BIT BELATEDLY, I'M AFRAID!

I'M ALREADY UPON YOU AND YOUR TREACHEROUS RED-HAIRED FRIEND...

...SO YOU'LL NO LONGER BE NEEDING YOUR PRECIOUS BRAIN-TRACER... WILL YOU?

AH, MY DEAR MEDUSA --I SEE YOU'RE AS SKILLED AS EVER WITH YOUR LIVING HAIR!

WHEN YOU WERE ONCE A MEMBER OF MY TEAM, I CONSIDERED IT AN ASSET--

--NOW IT IS AN ANNOYANCE, AS YOU ARE--

--TO BE DISPOSED OF--WITH AN ANTI-GRAVITY DISC ATTACHED TO YOUR LOVELY MIDDLE!

I SWEAR TO YOU, WIZARD, IF YOU'VE HARMED MEDUSA, YOU WON'T LEAVE THIS ROOM ALIVE!

THREATS, RICHARDS? A MAN OF YOUR INTELLIGENCE--

--SINKING TO VERBAL ABUSE? SHAME!

STILL, I SUPPOSE YOU CAN'T BE **BLAMED.**

HAVING SO RECENTLY LOST YOUR **WIFE,** YOU NO DOUBT **IDENTIFY** HER WITH THE SCARLET-TRESSED **INHUMAN--**

--A FAILING I CAN UNDERSTAND, EVEN **SYMPATHIZE** WITH.

IT'S A PITY MY SYMPATHY IS OVERWHELMED BY MY **HATRED,** RICHARDS...

...FOR IT **MIGHT** HAVE SAVED YOUR PATHETIC **LIFE!**

WHAM!

AND SO, AFTER THE WIZARD HAS PLANTED ANOTHER ANTI-GRAV DISC, THIS TIME ON THE F.F.'S STUNNED LEADER...

NOW, DEAR ENEMIES-- THE HOUR HAS **COME.**

--THE HOUR WHEN THE FRIGHTFUL FOUR WILL **TRIUMPH--**

--AND THE FANTASTIC FOUR-- **WILL FALL!**

AT THAT PRECISE INSTANT, ON THE THIRTY-SIXTH, AND TOPMOST FLOOR...

AIN'T THIS THE WAY IT **ALWAYS** WORKS OUT?

STRETCHO TELLS ME TA **MEET** HIM HERE AFTER I CHECK OUT THE **ROOF--**

--AND THEN **HE** DON'T **SHOW.** IT'S ENUFF TA MAKE A GUY FEEL **UNWANTED.**

SO WHADDA I DO **NOW?** TWIDDLE MY **THUMBS--** WHILE SANDMAN AND THOSE **OTHER** JERKS RUN **LOOSE?**

Y'KNOW, COME TA **THINK** OF IT...

...FOR A PLACE THAT'S SUPPOSED TA BE UNDER **SEIGE,** THIS JOINT'S BEEN PRETTY **QUIET...!**

DON'T WORRY, BEN; IT WON'T STAY QUIET MUCH LONGER...!

IN FACT, MAYBE IT'S ***TOO*** QUIET... LIKE THE ENTIRE BUILDING'S SORTA HOLDING ITS ***BREATH!***

HUH? HEY, STRETCH, IS THAT--

KAPLOW!

ASK A STUPID QUESTION, GET A STUPID ***ANSWER!***

YOU ***SAID*** IT, MEATHEAD! BY NOW, YER PAL RICHARDS IS A COSTUME FULLA ***MUSH***--

BRAK!

--AND YOU AIN'T FAR ***BEHIND!***

ON YER ***FEET***, YA OVERGROWN MASS OF ***HOT AIR.***

I'VE BEEN WANTIN' TO WASTE YOU FOR ***YEARS***... AND TODAY I'M FINALLY GONNA GET MY ***CHANCE.***

YOU'RE ***FORGETTIN'*** SOMETHING, SANDY:

I'M YOUR EVER-LOVIN' BLUE-EYED ***THING***--

--AND CHUMPO, I DON'T WASTE ***EASY!***

BACKOP!

WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARS, SEVERAL HEARTBEATS LATER, BOTH MEN ARE STILL ON THEIR FEET... AND IN BOTH THEIR MINDS, THERE EXISTS A BITTER REVELATION:

RIPPPP!

THIS IS A FIGHT TO THE FINISH-- A STRUGGLE ONLY ONE OF THEM WILL WALK AWAY FROM--

--A BATTLE EACH IS DETERMINED TO WIN!

CHAWHAM!

FORGET IT, GRIMM! NUTHIN' YOU CAN DO CAN HURT ME--

--NOT WHEN I CAN MAKE MYSELF HARD AS A ROCK--HEAVY AS A BOULDER!

I'LL JUST WEAR YOU DOWN, AND WHEN YOU'RE WEAK AS A KITTEN--I'LL DEMOLISH YA!

BUNK! I DON'T CARE WHAT YA DO WITH YER CRUMMY BOD, SANDMAN--

YA JUST AINT GOT WHAT IT TAKES!

SPAK-SPA

POWERS OR NO POWERS-- YOU'RE A SLOB!

DON'T TALK TA ME THAT WAY, PUNK. I'M THE SANDMAN, YA HEAR?

THAT MAKES ME BETTER THAN YOU-- BETTER'N ANYONE!

FOOM

AW, YER MOTHER WEARS ARMY BOOTS.

I'M *WARNIN'* YA, GRIMM--KEEP MY MA *OUTTA* THIS, OR I'LL--*HEY!*

IT'S *HER!* THE CRAZY *DAME*--AFTER ALL THESE MONTHS, WHY'D SHE HAVE TO SHOW UP *NOW?*

MY NAME IS *THUNDRA,* SANDMAN--NOT *"CRAZY DAME"!*

WHEN I *QUIT* YOUR GROUP, I WARNED YOU NOT TO ATTACK THE FANTASTIC FOUR *AGAIN**--

--AND *ESPECIALLY* NOT THE MALE CALLED *THE THING!* I TOLD YOU, HE'S *MINE*--

*IN F.F. #133. --ROY.

--AND IF ANYONE IS TO DESTROY HIM-- I *WILL!*

THUD!

ON MY HONOR AS A *WOMAN,* THIS I *SWEAR!*

THE WIZARD WAS *RIGHT*-- WE'RE BETTER OFF *WITHOUT* YOU, LADY!

YOU'RE NUTTY AS A CRUMMY *FRUITCAKE!*

WATCH YER *MOUTH,* SANDY. IT AINT *OFTEN* I GET A GIRL TA STICK UP FER ME--EVEN A DAME WHO'S TRIED TO *MASH* ME TWICE BEFORE!*

I AM NOT A "GIRL" *OR* A "DAME," BEN GRIMM--AND I AM *HARDLY* "STICKING UP FOR YOU"!

WHEN YOU'RE BEATEN, IT'LL BE BY *MY* HAND--NO ONE *ELSE'S!*

HAVE IT *YOUR* WAY, BLONDIE. I DON'T CARE *WHY* YOU'VE POPPED IN--

--I'M JUST REAL GLAD TA *SEE* YA. NOW GET OUTTA MY *WAY*--IT'S *CLOBBERIN' TIME!*

*IN THE AFORE-MENTIONED #133, AND BEFORE THAT IN ISSUES #129 AND #130-R.T.

ELSEWHERE, AT THAT MOMENT...

THE WIZARD'S GONNA BE REAL *PROUD* OF THE WAY I HANDLED THIS. WHEN WE GET THROUGH WITH THESE CLOWNS, THEY'LL BE SORRY THEY EVER *TANGLED* WITH US, OR I'M A--

HUH? THE PASTE'S GETTIN' *HOT* ALL OF A SUDDEN-- TOO HOT TO *HOLD!*

WHAT IN THE *BLAZES--?*

FOOM

-YEEEOOW!-

IT'S THE *TORCH!* HE'S BURNED HIS WAY *FREE!*

YOU *SAID* IT, MISTER--

--AND NOW I'M COMING AFTER-- *YOU!*

YOU WON'T GET THE *CHANCE* TO USE ANY OF THOSE TRICKY *TRAPS* OF YOURS--BEFORE *I* GET THE CHANCE TO DO--

THIS!

WELL, WHAT DO YOU *KNOW!* LOOKS LIKE I'VE FOUND YOUR FRIENDLY *LEADER,* TRAPSTER--NOT *TOO* HARD TO DO, SINCE YOU WERE HEADED TOWARD MEETING HIM, *ANYWAY.*

KRAASH!

TRAPSTER, YOU INCREDIBLE *BUFFOON!* YOU'VE LED HIM RIGHT *TO* ME!

IN ANOTHER **MOMENT,** I WOULD HAVE DEDUCED THE **CODE COMBINATION** OF RICHARD'S PRIME **COMPUTER--**

--AND ALL OF HIS SECRETS, ALL OF HIS **WEAPONS--** WOULD HAVE BEEN **MINE!**

THEY'LL **STILL** BE MINE, TORCH-- ONLY **YOU** STAND IN MY WAY--

--AND YOU **WON'T** BE IN MY WAY **MUCH LONGER--EH?**

TOUGH **COOKIES,** WIZARD. THE TRAPSTER USED THIS GADGET ON **ME--**

LET'S SEE HOW **YOU** LIKE BEING TURNED INTO A HUMAN **BUBBLE-BATH!**

URRRKKKK!

MOMENTS **LATER,** IN THE NEXT ROOM...

JOHNNY! DON'T JUST **STAND** THERE-- **RELEASE** US!

HOLD YOUR **HORSES,** MEDUSA.

THIS IS A SIGHT I WANT TO **REMEMBER--** FOR A LONG, **LONG** TIME!

AND, TO TIE-UP THE LAST FEW **THREADS** OF OUR RAPIDLY-CONCLUDING **STORY,** LET'S TURN BACK FOR ONE FINAL LOOK AT THE GRAVEL-TONED **BEN GRIMM--**

--WHO, AT THE MOMENT, ISN'T **SAYING** MUCH--

--FIGURING TO LET HIS ACTIONS SPEAK **FOR** HIM--**MUCH** LOUDER THAN **WORDS!**

FACE IT, SANDY--

KRAK

THAT'S ALL SHE **WROTE!**

EPILOGUE: A BATTLE CAN BE MANY THINGS, DEPENDING ON THE MEN FIGHTING IT--AND THE REASON FOR THEIR FIGHTING. THIS BATTLE HAS PROVEN AN INTERLUDE IN A MUCH GREATER WAR--A BRIEF RESPITE, OF SORTS, BETWEEN ONE TEMPEST OF EMOTION AND THE NEXT.

LOOKS LIKE THIS IS ONE YOU OWE TO THUNDRA AND ME, REED.

WE WERE THE ONES WHO PULLED YOUR FAT OUT OF THE PROVERBIAL FIRE...

THOUGH WHY THUNDRA DID, I DON'T KNOW.

DON'T KID YERSELF, TORCHIE.

YOU AND BLONDIE DIDN'T HAVE A THING TA DO WITH IT.

BEN, YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS. THUNDRA SAVED YOUR LIFE!

I HARDLY THINK SO, MEDUSA--NOT THAT THE CHAUVINISTIC MR. GRIMM WOULD ADMIT IT, IF I HAD.

STILL, MY INTERVENTION DID GIVE YOU A MOMENT'S BREATHING SPACE--FOR WHICH YOU SHOULD BE GRATEFUL.

I PROMISE YOU, YOU'LL RECEIVE NO SUCH FAVOR WHEN NEXT WE BATTLE--

AND BATTLE, I ASSURE YOU, WE SHALL.

WHICH REMINDS ME, THUNDRA--

OLD FRIEND, THAT ISN'T VERY FAIR-MINDED, AND YOU KNOW IT.

THUNDRA MAY BE MANY THINGS--BUT I'M SURE A TRAITOR ISN'T ONE OF THEM.

HOLY COW! SPEAKING OF TRAITORS, REED--LOOK OUT THE WINDOW!

IT'S HIM--AND HE'S GOT AN ARMY!

AN ARMY? JOHNNY, I DON'T UNDERSTAND--?

--WHY DID YOU APPEAR SO SUDDENLY? IT'S ALMOST AS THOUGH YOU KNEW THE FRIGHTFUL FOUR WOULD BE ATTACKING US--!

SHE WUZ ONE OF THEM, WASN'T SHE, STRETCH?

IT WOULDN'T SURPRISE ME IF SHE STILL IS!

USE YOUR EYES, REED! DON'T YOU SEE--

"IT'S THE SUB-MARINER...AND SUE... AND FROM THE WAY HE'S SHOUTING, THEY MEAN BUSINESS...BAD BUSINESS FOR US ALL!"

HEAR ME, SURFACE-PEOPLE! I HAVE COME TO WREAK MY VENGEANCE FOR THE EVIL MY PEOPLE HAVE SUFFERED AT YOUR HANDS--

AS OF THIS MOMENT, NAMOR AND THE SURFACE WORLD--ARE AT WAR!

AND, IN A TOWER COMPLEX OVERLOOKING NEW YORK HARBOR, FIVE FRIENDS LISTEN TO THE UNDERSEA PRINCE'S GRIM WORDS WITH A MIXTURE OF HORROR AND AWE...AND IN THEIR HEARTS, THEY KNOW...

THE BATTLE HAS ONLY BEGUN!

NEXT ISSUE: TO LOVE, HONOR...AND DESTROY!

SEE YOU THEN, PILGRIM!

FANTASTIC FOUR

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TM

TO LOVE, HONOR, AND DESTROY!

WITH SUE RICHARDS' HELP--!

--THE SURFACE WORLD WILL BE MINE!!

NOT WHILE THE THING IS STILL ALIVE!

BUCKLER • SINNOTT

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

GERRY CONWAY / WRITER | RICH BUCKLER / ARTIST | JOE SINNOTT / EMBELLISHER | JOHN COSTANZA, letterer / P. GOLDBERG, colorist | ROY THOMAS / EDITOR

THE SUB-MARINER IS ATTACKING THE SURFACE WORLD! (JUST REMEMBER, GANG...YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST!) ('nuff said!)

TO LOVE, HONOR, and DESTROY!

NOT PRECISELY THE VOW YOU TOOK WHEN YOU MARRIED REED RICHARDS, SUSAN--BUT CERTAINLY THE VOW HE'S COME TO DESERVE!

WITH YOU BY MY SIDE, I WILL SEEK REVENGE FOR THE EVIL RICHARDS HAS DONE TO YOU AND YOUR SON! THE ENTIRE SEA-WORLD STANDS BEHIND ME IN THIS-- OUR ULTIMATE BATTLE!

IMPERIUS REX!

LOOKS LIKE THE TORCH WAS *RIGHT*, REED.

THAT'S *NAMOR* DOWN THERE--WITH *SUZIE*-- AND IT SEEMS LIKE HE'S GOT EVERY LAST BLASTED *SEA-MONSTER WITH* 'IM!

YA ASK ME, HE MEANS *BUSINESS*.

THAT SUITS ME *FINE*, GRIMM--BECAUSE *I* MEAN BUSINESS *AS WELL!*

NOT ONLY DOES THE MAN STEAL MY *WIFE*-- NOW HE COMES TO WAVE THE FACT IN MY *FACE*--*FLAUNTING IT!*

HE'S GOING TO *PAY* FOR THIS--

HE'S GOING TO PAY!

REED, *WAIT*... THERE MUST BE SOME *EXPLANATION*. NAMOR HAS NEVER BEEN A *VICIOUS* MAN--

THIS ISN'T YOUR *AFFAIR*, MEDUSA.

STAY *OUT*.

DON'T MIND MY BROTHER-IN-LAW, RED--YOU'D BE SNAPPING TOO IF YOUR LOVER TOLD YOU HE LOVED ANOTHER WOMAN.

EVEN IF SUE *IS* MY SISTER, I DON'T LIKE WHAT SHE'S DOING TO *REED*.

WE HAVE TO STICK *WITH* HIM NOW--HE *NEEDS* US.

JOHNNY-- *WAIT*.

YOU GO *AHEAD*... I HAVE TO *THINK* ABOUT ALL THIS...

SOMETHING ABOUT THE WAY NAMOR'S ACTING *BOTHERS* ME!

LOOK, MEDUSA --IT'S UP TO *YOU*.

AFTER ALL, YOU'RE NOT A *REGULAR* MEMBER OF THE *F.F.* -- YOU'RE AN *INHUMAN*.

IF YOU DECIDE TO *COME*... WELL...

"... YOU KNOW WHERE WE'LL *BE*."

AND IF WHAT I SUSPECT IS *TRUE*--

--I MAY *REJOIN* YOU--

--SOONER THAN *EITHER* OF US *THINK*.

MEANWHILE...

AW, C'MON, STRETCH--LET ME FLY THIS BABY!

YA KNOW HOW I HATE BEING A BACK-SEAT DRIVER!

I ASSURE YOU, BEN, THERE WON'T BE A REPETITION OF WHAT HAPPENED THIS MORNING-- I'M COMPLETELY IN CONTROL OF MYSELF.*

AS A MATTER OF FACT, I FEEL ALMOST NO EMOTION AT ALL--

*REED ALMOST CRACKED UP THE FANTASTICAR LAST ISSUE. -- ROY.

"EXCEPT, PERHAPS ...HATRED.

"A HATRED YOU COULDN'T UNDER-STAND...

"...AND FOR YOUR SAKE, I PRAY YOU NEVER DO."

BITTER WORDS, REED RICHARDS; WORDS WHICH HAVE THEIR ECHO A DOZEN BLOCKS AWAY, WHERE...

SEND THE SEA-DEMON FORWARD, MY FRIEND-- LET IT REND AND CRUSH THE TOYS OF SURFACE MANKIND!

LET THE DESTRUC-TION BE A DECLAR-ATION--

--A DECLARATION OF WAR WITH THE ACCURSED FANTASTIC FOUR!

BUT NAMOR-- WHAT ABOUT JOHNNY AND BEN?

YOU PROMISED THEY WOULDN'T BE HURT-- THAT YOU WOULDN'T--

THEY WHO STAND WITH MY ENEMY ARE MY ENEMY, SUSAN. MY ENEMY-- AND YOURS!

AARRNNN

AND WHILE A SQUAD OF SPECIAL RIOT-CONTROL OFFICERS MAKE A VAIN, ATTEMPT TO TURN BACK NAMOR'S ATTACKING SEA-BEASTS--AIMING THEIR FIRE AT BOTH THE BEASTS AND NAMOR HIMSELF--

--SUE RICHARDS REACHES A FATEFUL DECISION-- AND ACTS!

EXCELLENT, SUSAN--YOUR INVISIBLE FORCE-FIELD WILL PROTECT BOTH OF US FROM PETTY GUNFIRE!

--THUS FREEING ME TO CONCERN MYSELF WITH OTHER MATTERS--

--YOUR WIFE IS MINE-- AND I AND MY BEASTS WILL HAVE REVENGE FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO HER--! DO YOU HEAR?

--SUCH AS YOUR FORMER HUSBAND!

I'M STILL HER HUSBAND UNTIL A COURT OF LAW SAYS OTHERWISE, NAMOR--

--AND I WON'T LET YOU OR ANY MAN TAKE HER FROM ME!

YOU EGOTISTICAL FOOL! YOU ALREADY LOST HER--

YOU DESTROYED WHATEVER LOVE THERE WAS BETWEEN YOU, WHEN YOU PUT YOUR OWN SON INTO A COMA!*

I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE, RICHARDS--

* MORE OR LESS, IN FF #141. --ROY.

WE WILL HAVE REVENGE!

SPLOW!

HANG ON, STRETCHO-- I'VE GOT YA.

MAYBE IT WOULD BE BETTER IF YOU HADN'T CAUGHT ME, BEN.

NAMOR'S RIGHT, AFTER ALL-- FOR WHAT I DID TO FRANKLIN AND SUE-- PERHAPS I DESERVE TO DIE!

BUNK!

OLD FISH-FACE IS FULLA SEA-WEED, STRETCH --AND DON'T YOU FOR-GET IT!

INSULT ME IF YOU *MUST*, BEN GRIMM-- MOCKERY WON'T CHANGE THE *TRUTH* OF MY *ACCUSATIONS!*

SOON, YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS WILL BEG FOR *MERCY* AT MY HAND--

--A MERCY THAT WILL BE *DENIED* YOU, AS *YOU* DENIED MERCY TO *SUE!*

RICHARDS, *LOOK!* NAMOR'S SEA-BEASTS--THEY'RE ATTACKING *MANHATTAN!*

THEN IT'S *MORE* THAN JUST A *PERSONAL* FIGHT, THUNDRA--

THE SUB-MARINER HAS TO BE *STOPPED*--NO MATTER *WHAT* THE COST!

THEN LET *ME* DO THE STOPPING, BROTHER-IN-LAW.

DON'T FORGET--I'VE GOT A STAKE IN THIS *TOO!*

FLAME ON!

BETTER SAY YOUR *PRAYERS*, NAMOR--

--'CAUSE WHEN I GET THROUGH PUTTING UP A *STEAM-CLOUD* AROUND YOUR *PALS*--

MISTER, THE HUMAN TORCH IS COMING AFTER YOU!

TORCHIE-- *BEHIND YA!* IT'S--

BAMO!

UNNNNHH!

YOUR WARNING IS A BIT *BELATED*, GRIMM.

NAMOR HAS ALREADY *STRUCK*-- AND THE FIGHT IS *ENDED* BEFORE IT IS *BEGUN!*

DON'T-- BET ON IT, FIN-EARS!

SPLASH!

JUST GIVE ME --A MOMENT--TO GET MY BREATH BACK--AND WE'LL SEE WHO'LL-- BEAT WHO!

JOHNNY, NO! THIS ISN'T YOUR FIGHT--! PLEASE, PLEASE-- DON'T ANGER NAMOR!

I DON'T WANT YOU HURT-- NOT YOU!

YOUR BROTHER HAS MADE HIS CHOICE, SUSAN-- NOW HE MUST PAY FOR THAT DECISION--

KABLAM!

--AS ALL WILL PAY WHO STAND AGAINST ME!

QUICKLY, THUNDRA--WE'VE GOT TO CATCH HIM BEFORE HE SAILS PAST US--!

I SEE THAT, RICHARDS-- AND TO SEE, IS TO ACT.

WHIP!

IF THE SUB-MARINER HADN'T STUNNED ME, I COULD HAVE STRETCHED FOR JOHNNY MYSELF-- BUT--

THERE'S NO NEED FOR YOU TO SALVE YOUR MALE EGO, RICHARDS.

LET'S SIMPLY BE THANKFUL THE BOY IS ALIVE.

A FACT WHICH I ADMIT I FIND SURPRIS-ING, CONSIDERING NAMOR'S REPUTED STRENGTH!

"REPUTED" AIN'T THE WORD FOR IT, THUNDRA --NAMOR'S STRENGTH IS JUST A LOTTA HOT AIR.

YA WANNA SEE STRONG, I'LL SHOW YA STRONG--

--FROM YER EVER-LOVIN' BLUE-EYED THING!

PLOW

STOP IT! STOP IT!

WHY WON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? I WANT TO BE WITH NAMOR--HE NEEDS ME, AND I NEED HIM!

IF YOU'VE HURT HIM--

--I SWEAR, I'LL MAKE YOU PAY-- ALL OF YOU!

SUSAN-- WAIT--! IT'S NOT NECESSARY FOR YOU TO--

SUE'S FORCE FIELD-- IT APPEARED SO SUDDENLY, THERE WAS NO TIME TO SWERVE AWAY--!

SHE'S DEMOLISHED THE ENTIRE FANTASTICAR-- AND--

KRASH!

WE'RE FALLING!

THAT'S WHAT I LIKE ABOUT YOU, STRETCHO--

YOU'RE PER-CEPTIVE!

YOU DID IT, SUSAN -- WE'VE WON.

DON'T YOU SEE? WE'VE SUCCEEDED WHERE SO MANY OTHERS HAVE FAILED--

WE'VE DEFEATED THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

"NAMOR'S RIGHT, BLAST IT," THINKS BEN GRIMM BITTERLY. "WE'VE HAD IT -- BUT NOT BECAUSE HE'S BEATEN US-- BUT BECAUSE WE'VE BEATEN OURSELVES! "HOW ELSE COULD IT END UP...

"...WHEN TA CRUSH THE SUB-MARINER, WE'D HAVE TA CRUSH SUZIE TOO?

"FUNNY...HOW YER MIND PLAYS TRICKS WITH YA SOMETIMES. HERE I SHOULD BE TRYING TA FIGURE A WAY OUTTA THIS MESS, AND ALL I CAN DO IS REMEMBER...

"REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME WE EVER HAD A TANGLE WITH NAMOR, BACK WHEN WE'D BEEN THE FANTASTIC FOUR FOR ONLY A FEW MONTHS...*

...BACK WHEN WE WERE ALL FRIENDS; REED, SUZIE, JOHNNY AND ME... OR AT LEAST, FRIENDS MOST OF THE TIME...

* WAY BACK IN FF #4. --R.T.

"IT WAS RIGHT AFTER OUR FIRST FIGHT-- JOHNNY HAD GONE OFF BY HIMSELF, ALL MIFFED--

"--AND HE'D RUN INTA THIS BUM IN A FLOP HOUSE, A GUY WITH AMNESIA--

"--A GUY WHO TURNED OUT TO BE THE LONG-LOST SUB-MARINER!

"OF COURSE, JUST HAVIN' JOHNNY SHAVE OFF HIS BEARD DIDN'T GIVE NAMOR BACK HIS MEMORY. NO, THAT TOOK SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE TRICKY...

"MAINLY, DUMPIN' HIM IN THE CRUMMY ATLANTIC OCEAN!

"THAT WOKE HIM UP ALL RIGHT-- AND WHEN HE TRIED TO RETURN TO HIS KINGDOM OF **ATLANTIS**, AND FOUND THAT ALL HIS PEOPLE HAD **VANISHED** SINCE HE DISAPPEARED--APPARENTLY DRIVEN AWAY BY SOME **ATOMIC TESTS** RUN BY THE **SURFACE WORLD**--

"WELL--**THAT** WOKE UP SOME-THIN' **ELSE** IN HIM--HIS **HATRED OF MANKIND!**

"NATURALLY, HE DIDN'T HATE **EVERYONE**--IN FACT, HE EVEN FELL IN **COVE** WITH A SURFACE GIRL--**SUZIE**, WHO REMINDED HIM OF **ANOTHER** GIRL HE'D LOVED, LONG **AGO!**

"HE PROMISED HER **EVERY-THING**, BUT SUZIE TURNED HIM DOWN... SAID SHE LOVED REED **MORE**... AND THAT MADE NAMOR **MAD.**

"HE DECLARED **WAR** ON THE AIR-BREATHERS...

"...EVEN WOKE UP ONE'A HIS OLD **SEA-MONSTERS** * WITH SOME KINDA WEIRD **HORN.**

"BY THIS TIME, THE ENTIRE F.F. WAS INVOLVED --AND REED CAME UP WITH A PORTABLE **BOMB** HE STRAPPED TA MY BACK-- A BOMB I HADDA PLANT **INSIDE** THE SEA-MONSTER, LIKE JONAH CRAWLING DOWN THE BELLY OF THAT OLD **WHALE!**

"I **PLANTED** IT, ALL RIGHT.. AND GOT **OUTTA** THERE LIKE MY LIFE **DEPENDED** ON IT...

TICK TICK TICK TICK TICK TICK

"...'CAUSE IT **DID.**

"AFTER THE BOMB WENT OFF, WE WERE ABLE TO FACE NAMOR ON **EQUAL TERMS**--

* SEE PANEL THREE ON PREVIOUS PAGE. --ROY.

"--AND AFTER WE'D SPENT A FEW MINUTES *BEATIN'* ON EACH OTHER--"

NAMOR, IT'S *OVER!* WHY WON'T YOU *SEE* THAT?

VERY WELL--FOR NOW, THE BATTLE IS *ENDED.*

NOT BECAUSE YOU'VE *WON*--BUT BECAUSE SUSAN *WISHES* IT SO.

SOMEDAY, WE'LL MEET *AGAIN*--AND NAMOR WILL BE *SUPREME!*

YEAH, THAT'S THE WAY IT *HAPPENED*--AND WE *DID* MEET HIM AGAIN, AND EACH TIME--WE *STOPPED* 'IM.

FOR A WHILE, IT LOOKED LIKE WE COULD ALL BE *ALLIES*...

BUT THAT'S JUST ANOTHER BURIED *DREAM* NOW...

"...ALONG WITH A LOT OF *OTHER* DREAMS, NAMOR IS ON THE *RAMPAGE*... AND IT'S UP TO *US* TO STOP HIM, EVEN IF IT MEANS HURTIN' *SUZIE*...

"SURE, WE GOTTA STOP HIM...*IF WE CAN!*"

FORWARD, MY PET--*DESTROY* THE SURFACE MEN, *CRUSH* THEIR WEAPONS--THEIR PUNY CARS, THEIR PETTY *HOVELS!*

SMASH THEM--! SMASH THEIR PRECIOUS *CITY*--

SMASH THEIR PATHETIC WORLD!

THAT CUTS IT! I NEVER HEARD HIM LIKE THIS--

HE'S GONE COMPLETELY WACKO!

AND, AS THOUGH TO UNDERSCORE THE THING'S CONCLUSIONS, NAMOR'S BEASTS SWARM FORWARD--

--LIVING NIGHTMARES GONE BERSERK -- FOLLOWING A LEADER GONE MAD!

OKAY, BOYS-- TIME OUT.

I KNOW YOU'RE ONLY DOIN' WHAT COMES NATURAL TA YA-- BUT FRANKLY, THAT'S JUST TOO BAD..!

NEW YORK'S GOT ENOUGH PROBLEMS-- WHAT WITH MUGGERS AND STRIKERS AND CABBIES WITH BAD BREATH-- WITHOUT YOU GUYS SHOWIN' UP TA KILL THE TOURIST TRADE.

SO BEAT IT, HUH? BEFORE YA MAKE ME MAD!

ARRRR

WELL, WHADDAYA *KNOW?* IF IT AIN'T THE TWIN BROTHER OF THE BOZO I *BLEW UP--!*

IF YOU'RE *SO EAGER* TA BE BLASTED LIKE *HE* WAS, HANDSOME--

--BE MY GUEST--*AN'* COME *AN'* *GET IT!*

KAPOW!

THE *THING!* SO, YOU HAVEN'T LEARNED YOUR LESSON *YET,* YOU BULGING *BUFFOON?*

KEEP *TALKIN',* NAMOR--IT'S *MUSIC* TO MY SHELL-LIKE *EARS!*

BUNT!

ONCE I'M DONE WITH *THIS* CREEPO--I'M COMIN' AFTER *YOU!*

NO!

BACK AWAY, BENJAMIN GRIMM--THE SUB-MARINER IS *MINE!*

YOU'RE NOT TO BE *HARMED*--UNTIL WE HAVE TIME FOR OUR *OWN* BATTLE, A STRUGGLE TO THE *DEATH!*

THUNDRA, *WAIT!* WHATEVER YOUR REASON FOR WANTING TO FIGHT NAMOR--HE'S TOO *POWERFUL* FOR YOU!

NONSENSE. HE'S ONLY A *MAN,* RICHARDS--

YOU'LL BE *KILLED.*

--AND THUNDRA FEARS NO MALE-- THIS, OR ANY OTHER!

THEN, WOMAN-- WHOEVER YOU ARE, YOU ARE A FOOL--

--AND BECAUSE YOU ARE A FOOL, YOU MUST PAY THE ULTIMATE PENALTY FOR YOUR STUPIDITY--

THRUM

--YOU MUST FACE DEFEAT-- AT THE HANDS OF NAMOR, PRINCE OF ATLANTIS--

NAMOR, THE AVENGING SON!

SPLAK!

BUT, WHILE THUNDRA AND NAMOR FACE OFF IN WHAT MAY BE THE FINAL CONFRONTATION FOR ONE OF THEM-- THE THING IS BUSY WITH A DEADLY CONFRONTATION OF HIS OWN--!

THIS IS GETTIN' RIDICULOUS! I'VE BEEN SPARRING WITH SO MANY UGLIES I'M GETTIN' PUNCH-DRUNK!

THERE'S GOTTA BE A WAY OUTTA THIS MESS--

--AN' MAYBE, JUST MAYBE--

--I'VE GOT AN IDEA WHAT THAT WAY IS!

SEEMS TA ME-- EVERYTHING'S CENTERED AROUND *SUZIE*-- AND *REED*--!

NAMOR WANTS *REVENGE* 'CAUSE OF *SUZIE*--

--AND SUZIE WANTS NAMOR-- 'CAUSE OF *REED*!

GUESS THAT LEAVES ME ONLY *ONE CHOICE*-- BUT BEFORE I CAN *GET* TO IT--

IT'S *CLOBBERIN'* TIME!

WHAMO!

MISTRESS--IT'S THE ORANGE-SKINNED *MONSTER*--

HE'S *ATTACKING* US!

BETTER CALL OFF YOUR PET *WATCHDOG*, LITTLE LADY --UNLESS YA WANT ME TO *TEAR* HIM OFF!

BEN, OH-- *BEN!* I NEVER WANTED TO HURT *YOU*!

I NEVER WANTED TO HURT *ANYONE*--!

YA GOT A FUNNY WAY OF *SHOWIN'* IT, SUZIE. MAYBE IT'S TIME WE *TALKED*!

AN INTERESTING CONCEPT, THAT--A CONCEPT IGNORED ELSEWHERE, AS--

NOW, NAMOR --NOW IT'S TIME FOR THE *FINAL* BLOW!

I'LL MAKE IT *SWIFT*--

--THOUGH YOU DON'T *DESERVE* IT!

ALL MEN ARE CRUEL--*VICIOUS*-- BUT YOU, WHO WOULD COME BETWEEN TWO *LOVERS*--

--YOU ARE THE CRUELEST MAN OF *ALL*!

SHALL I *DEFEND* YOU, MISTRESS? THE ORANGE-SKIN LOOKS *MENACING--!*

BEN, CAN'T YOU CONVINCE REED IT'S *USELESS?* NAMOR'S TOO POWERFUL-- HE WON'T REST UNTIL YOU'VE ALL SURRENDERED-- OR BEEN *DESTROYED!*

SUBBY'S *YOUR* SWEETHEART, SUZIE. *YOU* CALL 'IM OFF.

AS FER *REED--*

--DON'TCHA THINK YOU'VE PUT HIM THROUGH ENOUGH *ALREADY,* WITHOUT ASKIN' HIM TA GIVE IN TO THE GUY WHO'S ROBBED HIM OF EVERYTHIN' THAT MAKES LIFE WORTH *LIVIN'?*

YOU CAN'T *MEAN* THAT, BEN-- YOU *CAN'T!*

REED DOESN'T LOVE ME...!

HE'S SURE DOIN' A PRETTY GOOD *IMITATION,* SISTER.

BUT-- HE WAS ALWAYS SO *DISTANT.* HE NEVER SEEMED TO CARE WHETHER I WAS ALIVE-- OR *DEAD!*

YET-- THE WAY HE'S *FIGHTING* NAMOR--

THE *LOOK* I SAW ON HIS FACE--

BEN, IS IT POSSIBLE I'VE BEEN *WRONG* ABOUT HIM?

EVERY-BODY MAKES MISTAKES, SUZIE.

THE TRICK IS *ADMITTING* THEM.

STRETCHO ADMITTED *HIS--*

--CAN *YOU* ADMIT *YOURS?*

BLAM!

AND MEANWHILE...

A BLOW WELL *STRUCK,* THUNDRA.

A PITY YOUR *PERCEPTION* IS NOT AS IN-CISIVE AS YOUR *STRENGTH--*

--FOR YOU WOULD NOT HAVE SAID WHAT YOU *DID*-- ABOUT MY *CRUELTY.*

YOU DARE *DENY* IT?

YOU'RE MORE ARROGANT THAN I *THOUGHT,* ATLANTEAN.

NO MATTER, FOR--

I'M *SORRY,* THUNDRA-- BUT I CAN'T LET YOU CARRY *MY* FIGHT ANY LONGER!

BATTLING THE SUB-MARINER IS *MY* RESPONSI-BILITY.

I'LL *MEET* THAT RESPONSIBILITY-- EVEN IF IT *KILLS* ME!

Y'HEAR *THAT,* SUZIE? NO MATTER *WHAT* HE'S DONE, THE GUY *LOVES* YA.

THAT'S GOTTA COUNT FOR *SOMETHING*--

DOESN'T IT?

IF ONLY I KNEW WHAT WAS *RIGHT!* IS IT *ENOUGH* THAT HE LOVES ME?

CAN I *FORGIVE* HIM--ALL THAT'S HAPPENED IN THE *PAST?*

AND WHAT ABOUT THE *FUTURE?*

A FUTURE WITH-OUT *REED?* WITHOUT MY *HUSBAND?*

NO!

I *LOVE* HIM! I'VE *ALWAYS* LOVED HIM-- AND I CAN'T LET IT END *NOW!*

REED, NAMOR--*STOP!* I'VE BEEN WRONG, *TERRIBLY* WRONG!

I THOUGHT LOVE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE SOMETHING PERFECT--SOMETHING *IDEAL*-- SOMETHING UNREAL AND *ROMANTIC!*

NAMOR OFFERED ME THAT ONCE--AND THAT'S WHY I WENT *BACK* WITH HIM, WHEN HE OFFERED IT TO ME *AGAIN!*

BUT I REALIZE NOW THAT THERE'S *MORE* TO LOVE THAN A FANTASY--

--THAT THERE ARE COUNTLESS *MISTAKES* --COUNTLESS *INJURIES*--

--AND THAT NONE OF IT MATTERS--*NONE* OF IT--

--IF YOU JUST KNOW HOW TO SAY-- YOU'RE *SORRY.*

SAY, BUB... WHY DON'TCHA JUST *BEAT IT?*

IN CASE YA HADN'T NOTICED, YOU AIN'T *WANTED* ANYMORE.

I'LL LEAVE *GLADLY*, MY FRIEND-- NOW THAT I'M NO LONGER *NEEDED* HERE.

MAY NEPTUNE WATCH OVER YOU *ALL*-- TILL NEXT WE *MEET.*

"NEXT WE MEET", HUH?

I'LL "NEXT WE MEET," *YOU*, CREEP--RIGHT UP YOUR--AW, *FORGET* IT.

DID ALL GO ACCORDING TO *PLAN*, NAMOR?

PROJECT REVIVAL WAS A COMPLETE *SUCCESS*, OLD FRIEND--

--NONE OF THEM SUSPECTED IT WAS ALL AN *ACT* ON MY PART--THAT I NEVER INTENDED TO DESTROY NEW YORK-- OR TRULY *INVADE* THE SURFACE WORLD.

NOR DID THEY SUSPECT *YOU*--

--*TRITON*, ENVOY OF THE *INHUMANS!*

WE'VE DONE OUR WORK WELL, NAMOR.

BLACK BOLT WILL BE *PLEASED* THAT WE'VE BROUGHT OUR FRIENDS *TOGETHER* AGAIN.

...EVEN IF WE *WERE* FORCED TO USE A LITTLE *DECEPTION.*

DON'T YOU *AGREE*, MEDUSA?

COMPLETELY, TRITON. NAMOR MAY BE *PERSONA NON GRATIS* WITH THE F.F. FOR A WHILE-- UNTIL WE TELL THEM THE *TRUTH*--

--BUT THE END JUSTIFIES THE *MEANS* THIS TIME, I THINK.

...AND I'M SURE SUE AND REED RICHARDS WOULD MOST *DEFINITELY* AGREE!

FINI

NEXT ISSUE: A STORY WHICH **BEGINS** IN AVENGERS #127, AND **ENDS** IN F.F #150... THE TALE YOU'VE BEEN **BEGGING** FOR: THE **WEDDING** OF **CRYSTAL** AND **QUICKSILVER!**

BUT **BELIEVE** US WHEN WE SAY IT AIN'T YOUR NORMAL BED-OF-ROSES TYPE WEDDING!

GIANT-SIZE FANTASTIC FOUR

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GIANT-SIZE Fantastic Four™

OKAY, WATCHER! YA SENT ME BACK IN TIME TO STOP THE EARTH FROM GOING BANG--

BUT, IF THEM JOKERS GET THEIR WAY, I'M GONNA CASH IN MY CHIPS--

--IN THE ROARIN' 20'S!

CHICAGO TIME

COOLIDGE: I DO NOT CHOOSE TO RUN

AN ALL-NEW FEATURE-LENGTH F.F. EPIC!

TIME TO KILL!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

CATACLYSM!

CHAPTER 1

ALL RIGHT, BEN-- HEAD BACK TO *CAPE CANAVERAL.* THIS NEW SUB-ORBITAL *SHUTTLE CRAFT* DEVELOPED BY *NASA* CHECKS OUT ON *ALL LEVELS!*

Y'KNOW, STRETCH-- WHAT WITH THE *SMOG* IN NEW YORK, I AIN'T SEEN A SUNSET IN *SIX MONTHS.*

IT'S SORT OF NICE TA KNOW IT'S STILL *THERE.*

AS A BUDDY OF MINE ONCE *SAID*, BENJY...THAT AND TWO BITS JUST *MIGHT* BUY YOU A CUP OF COFFEE... *IF* YOU'RE WILLING TO HAGGLE THE *PRICE* DOWN.

GERRY CONWAY writer * JOHN BUSCEMA & CHIC STONE artists * JOE ROSEN, letterer STAN G. colorist * ROY THOMAS editor

SAY, WHAT'S WITH *YOU*, TORCHIE?

AIN'T YOU A LITTLE *YOUNG* TA GET *CYNICAL?*

WHO'S BEING CYNICAL? HAVE YOU TAKEN A LOOK AT *FOOD PRICES* LATELY...?

YOU TELL HIM, REED-- TELL HIM HOW MUCH YOU AND MEDUSA PAID FOR THAT *PIZZA* LAST NIGHT.

JOHNNY, THIS ISN'T THE TIME FOR *KIDDING AROUND.*

THIS TEST-FLIGHT IS VERY *IMPORTANT* TO--

IT'S ABOUT *OVER,* IS WHAT IT *IS!*

IN CASE YA HADN'T *NOTICED*-- WE'RE COMIN' IN FOR A *LANDING.*

FLORIDA, HERE WE--

EEYOW!

WHAT WUZ *THAT?* SOME SORTA *FLASH* ALL OVER THE BLASTED *PLANET--!*

HOLY COW, I'M *BLINDED!* CAN'T SEE THE CRUMMY *CONTROLS--!*

WE'RE GONNA *CRASH,* STRETCHO! *EVERYBODY BRACE YERSELVES!*

WE'RE COMIN' DOWN-- HARD!

RRRRRRRRIIPP!

FOR SEVERAL LONG, BREATHLESS MOMENTS, THERE IS *SILENCE.*

THEN, THE HISS OF A CYCLING *AIRLOCK* BREAKS THE STILLNESS, AND...

REED...I CAN'T *BELIEVE* IT... WE'RE *ALIVE!*

APPARENTLY WE *ARE*, MEDUSA... THANKS TO *BEN*. IF HE'D *PANICKED* FOR EVEN AN *INSTANT*...

WELL, THERE'S NO SENSE DWELLING ON *THAT*, IS THERE?

REED--HAVE YOU NOTICED ANYTHING *ODD*?

EVEN IF STRETCH HASN'T--*I* HAVE, NOW THAT I'VE GOT MY *EYES* BACK.

WHERE'S THE *AIRFIELD*?

POSSIBLY WE'VE LANDED SOME *DISTANCE* FROM OUR DESTINATION, BEN.

JOHNNY, WHY DON'T YOU BECOME THE *TORCH* AND TAKE A LOOK *AROUND*--AND SEE IF YOU CAN LOCATE A *HIGHWAY*, OR SOMETHING SIMILAR.

SURE THING--

IT'S JUST WHAT I NEED, AFTER BEING CRAMPED IN THAT *COCKPIT* ALL DAY.

FLAME ON!

BUT...

NOTHING BUT TREES AND *MARSHLAND*--NO BUILDINGS, NO TOWNS--

NOTHING!

WELL, SON?

YOU BETTER *BRACE* YOURSELF, BROTHER-IN-LAW.

WE'RE NOT JUST *MISPLACED*--WE'RE *LOST!*

*AND SO, AFTER JOHNNY HAS TOLD THE OTHERS WHAT HE'S **LEARNED**...*

GUESS WE *HIKE IT*, HUH, STRETCH?

WE DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER *CHOICE*, BEN.

FORTUNATELY, WE'RE PROBABLY STILL IN FLORIDA, IN SOME PART OF THE *EVERGLADES*--

--AND AT THE MOST, CIVILIZATION CAN'T BE MORE THAN A FEW *HOURS* AWAY!

YAAAAH!

REED! WHAT IN THE NAME OF AGON--?

WHOOPS! WE'VE GOT COMPANY, STRETCH--

--AND FROM THE WAY THEY'RE ACTIN' UP, THEY'VE GOT ALL THE MANNERS OF A BUNCH'A YANCY STREETERS!

TWAK!

THEY'RE JUST ABOUT AS GOOD-LOOKIN', TOO!

BACK OFF, BUDDIES.

FOOM!

AND IN CASE YOU NEED A LITTLE INCENTIVE-- HERE!

BEN, JOHNNY-- LOOK AT THEM!

THEY'RE NOT HUMAN--

THEY'RE PRIMITIVE-- APELIKE--

--AND FOR SOME REASON, THEY WANT US KILLED!

IT'S A PITY WE DON'T HAVE THE FACILITIES TO ANALYZE THESE CREATURES-- OR THE TIME--

--AND AT ANY RATE, I DOUBT IF THEY'D LET US STUDY THEM, SO--

--WE'LL SIMPLY HAVE TO PUT THEM OUT OF THE WAY-- CORRECT, BEN?

I SEE WHAT YOU'RE GETTIN' AT, REED.

JUST STAY LIKE YA ARE, ALL WRAPPED AROUND 'EM--

--AND MRS. GRIMM'S LITTLE BOY BENJY WILL DO THE REST!

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE-- BE *CAREFUL*, BEN!

KEEP YER *SHIRT* ON, HIGH-POCKETS.

SWOOOOSH!

JUST A FEW MORE TURNS TA GET UP SOME *SPEED*, AN' THEN--

KRAK!

BINGO! WE SNAP 'EM OUT LIKE KIDS OFF A BLAMED *TRAMPOLINE!*

MOMENTS LATER, AFTER REED HAS REGAINED HIS BREATH...

DON'T *SAY* IT, REED-- WE'VE ALREADY *GUESSED.*

IF THE *LANDSCAPE* AROUND HERE WASN'T CLUE ENOUGH, THOSE *CAVEMEN WERE.*

SOMEHOW, WE'VE GONE BACK IN *TIME...RIGHT?*

WRONG, JONATHAN STORM.

YOU HAVE NOT GONE *BACK* IN TIME...

RATHER, *TIME* ITSELF HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED, CHANGED...*TWISTED.*

THE ENTIRE WORLD HAS FALLEN BACK INTO A *PRIMORDIAL* STATE.

BECAUSE YOU FOUR WERE *OFF-PLANET*, YOU REMAIN UNAFFECTED --FOR *NOW.*

*THE WATCHER!**

ARE *YOU* RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THIS--?

**EVERYONE HERE REMEMBER BALDY FROM F.F.S #49, 50, 51--ETC.?-- ROY.*

HAVE YOU ALREADY FORGOTTEN MY *OATH*, REED RICHARDS ?

A WATCHER MAY ONLY *OBSERVE*, NOT ACT... THOUGH IT'S TRUE I'VE *BROKEN* THAT OATH IN THE PAST...

...AND THAT I INTEND TO BREAK IT *AGAIN*, TODAY.

NO, IT WAS NOT *I* WHO CHANGED THE FLOW OF *TIME*--

--BUT IF YOU WILL BE *PATIENT*, I WILL SHOW YOU HOW THE DEED *OCCURRED.*

WHAT YOU WILL SEE BEFORE YOU ON THE MONITOR SCREEN IS A RECREATION OF EVENTS WHICH TOOK PLACE A FEW *MINUTES* AGO...

MINUTES? BUT...

"I SAID MINUTES, REED RICHARDS; MERE **SECONDS** BEFORE YOUR SHUTTLE-CRAFT RE-ENTERED THE EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE, **THIS** HAPPENED..."

GOOD LORD--

THAT'S THE **BAXTER BUILDING**...OUR **HEADQUARTERS!**

SOMEONE MUST HAVE **BROKEN IN**--

--JUST LIKE THE **FRIGHTFUL FOUR!***

*IN F.F.#148.--ROY.

"QUITE SO, JONATHAN. YOU WILL NOTICE NOW JUST WHAT **SECTION** OF YOUR HEADQUARTERS THE INTRUDER **ENTERED**..!"

THAT'S THE **TIME DEVICE** WE CAPTURED FROM DOCTOR DOOM **YEARS** AGO*--!

*WAY BACK IN **F.F.#5**... THOUGH DOC DOOM'S **BORROWED** IT ONCE OR TWICE SINCE THEN.--ROY.

"AGAIN, QUITE **TRUE.** YOUR UNFORTUNATE VISITOR SEEMS TO HAVE ACCIDENTALLY **ACTIVATED** THE TIME DEVICE--

"--THROWING HIMSELF **BACKWARD** IN TIME--

--WHERE HE APPARENTLY CHANGED THE COURSE OF **HISTORY!**

CHANGED **HISTORY?** BUT THE **PARADOXES** INVOLVED--IT'S UNBELIEVABLE!

NEVERTHELESS... IT IS ALSO **TRUE.**

AND THAT'S THE REASON FOR THIS JUNGLE--THOSE **CAVEMEN**--?

EXACTLY.

THE POINT **NOW** IS... WHAT ARE YOU FOUR WILLING TO **DO**, SINCE YOU, AND YOU **ALONE**, REMAIN **UNAFFECTED** BY THESE CHANGES...?

DO WE HAVE ANY **CHOICE?**

THE KID'S **RIGHT.** WE ALL KNOW WHAT WE GOTTA DO...

...SO LET'S **DO** IT.

WE HAVE TO GO BACK IN TIME--AND **REVERSE** THE CHANGES...IF WE **CAN!**

DO YER **STUFF,** WATCHER... BEFORE WE GET **COLD FEET.**

AND WITH BEN GRIMM'S GRATING WORDS STILL **RINGING** IN THEIR EARS, TWO MEMBERS OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST FIGHTING TEAM SUDDENLY FIND THEMSELVES **WHIRLING** THROUGH TIME AND SPACE, FINALLY COMING TO A STOP **HERE**...

HERE BEING A SMALL TOWN IN UPSTATE NEW YORK, IN THE **FALL OF 1777,** WHERE REED RICHARDS AND JOHNNY STORM WILL FIGHT THEIR MOST **BIZARRE** BATTLE, IN A CHAPTER OF OUR STORY TITLED...

GEORGE WASHINGTON ALMOST SLEPT HERE!

CHAPTER 2

REED, HAVE I SEEN TOO MANY **MOVIES**--OR ARE WE BACK IN **REVOLUTIONARY WAR** DAYS?

IT SEEMS WE **ARE**, SON.

OUR TIME TRAVELING INTRUDER MUST HAVE LANDED **HERE**--AND IT'S UP TO **US** TO FIND HIM. BUT FIRST--

--I THINK WE'RE ABOUT TO MEET SOME *NATIVES* OF THIS TIME-PERIOD-- AND WE DON'T WANT THEM TO *SEE* US-- NOT JUST *YET!*

AND, AFTER THE VANGUARD OF THE AMERICAN SOLDIERS HAVE RIDDEN BY...

MRRMMPHH! UMMPHH!

MY *APOLOGIES*, GENTLEMEN...

...AND JUST TWO OF THE *BOYS* IN THEIR DUDS. GOOD *THINKING*, REED.

...BUT WE'D BE FAIRLY *CONSPICUOUS* IN OUR COSTUMES...

THE QUESTION *NOW* IS--WHAT HAPPENS *NEXT*?

I'VE A *THEORY* ABOUT THAT, JOHNNY. WHATEVER OUR TIME-TRAVELER *DID* MUST HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY *DRASTIC*...

...OTHERWISE IT COULDN'T HAVE *AFFECTED* OUR PRESENT WORLD SO *POTENTLY*.

IN *WHICH* CASE, WE NEED ONLY VISIT A *TAVERN* IN THE LOCALE--

--AND LISTEN TO WHATEVER *NEWS* THERE IS ABOUT RECENT--AH-- *DISTURBANCES*.

I GET THE IDEA, REED. LET THE INFO COME TO *US*, RIGHT?

REED DOESN'T ANSWER, FOR, THE NEXT MOMENT...

--CAPTURED BY THE *REDCOATS*, I TELL YE!

'TIS THE GOD'S TRUTH, AND YE ALL KNOW ME FOR AN *HONEST MAN!*

HAPPENED AT *OWL'S BRIDGE*, IT DID--

--THE GENERAL WAS OUT WITH A HANDFUL OF *SOLDIERS*, WHEN THE REDCOATS *CAUGHT* HIM!

"THE GENERAL"? REED, DO YOU *THINK*--?

'TIS A SAD DAY FOR THE COUNTRY, LADS. A *SAD* DAY, INDEED!

DON'T JUMP TO *CONCLUSIONS*, LAD.

STILL--WE'D BETTER LOOK *INTO* IT!

MOMENTS LATER, IN THE CORRAL BEHIND THE TAVERN...

SAY, REED-- THEY **HANG** HORSE-THIEVES, YOU KNOW.

I'M AFRAID WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR **NICETIES**, JOHNNY.

OF COURSE, IF YOU WANT TO **STAY BEHIND**--?

NOT A **CHANCE**, BROTHER-IN-LAW...

...I WOULDN'T GIVE UP PLAYING **PAUL REVERE** FOR THE **WORLD!**

C'MON, REED-- LET'S **RIDE!**

AND SO, A SHORT WHILE **LATER**, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF A SHALLOW RIVER, IN THE DARKNESS OF A NEW ENGLAND **FOREST**...

I THINK WE'VE **FOUND** SOMETHING, SON--A **FORT**--

--A **BRITISH** FORT!

AND **NOW**--?

NOW, WE **INFILTRATE**--

--AS ONLY **MR. FANTASTIC CAN!**

IT SEEMS JOHNNY AND I HAVE BEEN **LUCKY**... THOSE ARE **DEFINITELY** REDCOATS BELOW...

...AND IF MY MEMORY OF CERTAIN HISTORICAL **PAINTINGS** SERVES ME WELL...

"...THE MAN **WITH** THEM IS **GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON**, OF THE **AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY ARMY!**"

I TRUST YOU'LL BE **COMFORTABLE** DURING YOUR SHORT STAY WITH US, WASHINGTON. PERHAPS WE'LL HAVE TIME FOR A **CHAT** OR TWO...

...BEFORE WE HANG YOU FOR THE **TRAITOR** YOU ARE.

I'M CERTAIN WE HAVE NOTHING TO **SAY** TO EACH OTHER, COLONEL.

AS YOU **WANT** IT, "GENERAL"...

...THOUGH PERHAPS YOU'LL BE MORE **AMENABLE** TO DISCUSSION AFTER A NIGHT OR TWO IN THE **STOCKADE**.

GOOD **EVENING**, MY DEAR BOY, PLEASANT **DREAMS**.

MEANWHILE...

THERE'S REED'S *SIGNAL*-- HE WANTS ME TO FLAME ON...CAUSE SOME SORT OF *DISTRACTION.*

WELL, THAT'S FINE WITH *ME*--

--DISTRACTIONS ARE RIGHT UP MY *ALLEY!*

FOOSH!

WHEEE-OH!

LOOK OUT, GANG--IT'S GONNA BE A HOT TIME IN TORY-TOWN *TONIGHT!*

VAS IST *LOS?* MEIN GOTT, EIN IST--

QUIET, YOU BLASTED *HESSIAN!*

WE HAVE TO *HIRE* YOU BLOKES--NOT *LISTEN* TO YOU!

SILENCE-- *BOTH* OF YOU!

WHATEVER THAT FLAMING *DEVIL* IS--

--BLOW HIM OUT OF THE SKY!

BAWHAP!

SORRY, CHARLIE--BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN *THAT!*

CANNON BALLS *MELT* BEFORE THEY CAN *HURT* ME--

FAK!

FOOM!

--WHICH IS MORE THAN YOU CAN SAY FOR MY *FIRE-BALLS*-- KNOW WHAT I *MEAN?*

JOHNNY'S DECOY ATTACK IS WORKING *PERFECTLY*-- THE REDCOATS HAVE COMPLETELY *FORGOTTEN* THEIR PRISONER--

--WHICH MEANS IT'S TIME I *MOVED!*

GOOD LORD IN *HEAVEN!* SOME SORT OF *DEMON*--?

NOT A DEMON, GENERAL... A *FRIEND.*

MY PARTNER AND I INTEND TO GET YOU *OUT* OF HERE--AND FROM THE SOUNDS COMING FROM OUTSIDE, I THINK WE'RE CLOSE TO *SUCCEEDING.*

THIS IS *MOST* UNUSUAL, SIR. I'M NOT ACCUSTOMED TO BEING SHIFTED ABOUT LIKE *BAGGAGE*--

--BUT I SUPPOSE I HAVEN'T ANY REAL *CHOICE* IN THE MATTER, HAVE I?

AS AN ACQUAINTANCE OF MINE ONCE SAID-- "NECESSITY NEVER MADE A GOOD *BARGAIN.*"

THAT WAS *BEN FRANKLIN,* WASN'T IT, GENERAL?

WHY YES! DO YOU *KNOW* BENJAMIN?

IN A MANNER OF *SPEAKING.*

NOW, IF YOU'LL *EXCUSE* ME-- *JOHNNY!*

I HEAR YOU *CALLING,* LEADER MAN!

BETTER STAND BACK FROM THAT *WALL* A MINUTE--

I'M BURNING THROUGH!

I MUST BE GOING *MAD!*

FIRST -- A GENTLEMAN WHOSE BODY STRETCHES LIKE NEW ENGLAND *TAFFY*--

--AND NOW-- *A YOUTH OF FLAME!*

WE CALL HIM THE *HUMAN TORCH,* GENERAL-- AND I THINK YOU'LL *ADMIT*--

-- HE'S A *HANDY* SORT OF LAD TO HAVE *AROUND.*

*SEVERAL MOMENTS LATER, AFTER A FRANTIC CROSS-COUNTRY **FLIGHT,** THREE BATTLE-WEARY COMPANIONS **RECROSS** THE RIVER THEY PASSED EARLIER...*

*...AND SO **RETURN** TO RELATIVE **SAFETY...***

JOHNNY, THAT CLEARING JUST AHEAD WILL BE *FINE.* WE CAN LEAVE GENERAL WASHINGTON, AND HE CAN FIND HIS WAY BACK TO TOWN WITHOUT TOO MUCH DIFFICULTY.

BUT, SIR--

SURELY YOU'LL BE *RETURNING* WITH ME?

THAT MIGHT NOT BE A GOOD *IDEA*, GENERAL...

...CONSIDERING THAT *MOST* PEOPLE ARE PRETTY *SUPERSTITIOUS*, AND MIGHT NOT *UNDERSTAND* A FELLA LIKE ME...

...WHO CAN BURN AWAY *MANACLES*... WITH JUST A WAVE OF HIS *HAND.*

AM I *RIGHT*, REED?

I'M AFRAID *SO.* WE'D BE MOBBED... PROBABLY HUNG AS *WITCHES.*

SADLY ENOUGH, THERE'S *TRUTH* IN WHAT YOU SAY.

BUT PLEASE, SIR--*TELL* ME--

--WHERE WE *COME* FROM, AND HOW WE *GOT* OUR POWERS?

I'M *SORRY*, GENERAL--IT'S BETTER YOU NEVER *KNOW.*

HOW ABOUT *YOU*, MR. PRES--I MEAN, GENERAL WASHINGTON? HOW'D THE REDCOATS *CAPTURE* YOU, ANYWAY?

IT'S MOST *MYSTERIOUS*, YOUNG MAN.

IF I WERE AS SUPERSTITIOUS AS SOME OF MY COUNTRYMEN REGRETTABLY ARE... I'D SAY IT WERE *MAGIC*...

I WAS ON MY WAY TO A CAMP *SOUTH* OF HERE, CROSSING THE *OWL BRIDGE*, WHEN SOMETHING ABRUPTLY *APPEARED* BEFORE ME... A *MAN*, I THINK...

"...YES, A MAN... ACCOMPANIED BY A BLINDING FLASH OF *LIGHT*, WHICH CAUSED MY HORSE TO SHY AND *THROW* ME...

"BOTH MY ATTACHÉ AND MYSELF WERE KNOCKED **UNCONSCIOUS**, AND LAY IN THAT STATE UNTIL THE BRITISH AND THEIR MERCENARY HESSIANS **DISCOVERED** US BY THE ROADSIDE...

"...AND SUMMARILY MADE US **PRISONERS**.

"LATER, MY AIDE **ESCAPED**...

...AND I IMAGINE IT WAS **HE** WHO INFORMED YOU AS TO MY **WHEREABOUTS**.

IT PROBABLY **WAS** HIM, GENERAL--WE DIDN'T STAY AROUND VERY LONG AFTER WE HEARD WHAT **HAPPENED**.

I SEE. AND YOU WON'T SAY ANY MORE THAN THAT, BY WAY OF **EXPLANATION?**

AGAIN, GENERAL--I'M **SORRY**.

AH, WELL...IT HARDLY **MATTERS**, I SUPPOSE.

WHAT **IS** IMPORTANT, IS THAT YOU ARE **BOTH** VERY COURAGEOUS MEN...AND YOU **BOTH** HAVE MY DEEPEST **GRATITUDE**. MORE THAN THAT, I CANNOT GIVE YOU.

SIR... IT'S MORE THAN WE CAN **ASK**.

THAT GOES **DOUBLE** FOR ME.

A HUSHED **PAUSE**, THE RUSTLE OF EVENING **WIND** THROUGH TOWERING TREES...AND SUDDENLY, WHERE **THREE** ONCE STOOD...

...THERE STANDS ONLY **ONE**...

...AND THE **REST**...OF COURSE...IS HISTORY.

IN A PLACE **ELSEWHEN** IN TIME--A FLORIDA SWAMP IN WHAT WAS 1974, TO BE PRECISE--THREE VAGUELY HUMAN-LIKE BEINGS STAND WATCHING A **MONITOR SCREEN**, THEIR FACES REFLECTING VARYING DEGREES OF **CONCERN**. THE SILENCE **STRETCHES**...UNTIL **ONE** OF THEM BREAKS IT, IN HIS OWN **INIMITABLE** FASHION.

CHAPTER 3

THE GREAT GRIMMSBY

HEY, WHAT'S THE **BIG IDEA?** HOWCUM STRETCH AND HOT-HEAD GET TA GO BACK IN TIME--WHILE ME'N' MEDUSA STAND AROUND COOLIN' OUR HEELS LIKE A PAIR'A **PINCH HITTERS**?

YA ASK ME, IT AIN'T **FAIR!** 'SAMATTERAFACT, IT'S DOWNRIGHT **DISCRIMINATIN'!**

BEN, YOU'RE HARDLY BEING **RATIONAL.** I'M SURE THE WATCHER HAS A VERY GOOD **REASON** WHY HE SENT ONLY REED AND JOHNNY BACK...

THOUGH I CONFESS... I **WOULD** LIKE TO **HEAR** IT.

HOW **ABOUT** IT, BALDY? LIKE I SAID **BEFORE**...

WHAT'S THE **BIG IDEA?**

THE "BIG IDEA," MY FRIEND, IS SIMPLY *THIS*:

YOU AND THE SCARLET-HAIRED INHUMAN WERE RETAINED IN THE PRESENT IN CASE SOME *DIFFICULTY* PRESENTED ITSELF...

LIKE IF REED AND THE KID GOT IN TROUBLE, WE WUZ SUPPOSED TO PULL 'EM OUT, *RIGHT*?

WELL--THEY *AIN'T* IN TROUBLE--SO *NOW* WHAT?

NOW... WE PROCEED TO *STEP TWO.*

WHICH *IS*--?

YOU AND MEDUSA MUST *INTERCEPT* THE TIME-TRAVELING INTRUDER AS HE *BOUNCES BACK* THROUGH TIME.

LIKE A STONE SKIPPING ACROSS A *POND*, HE WILL MAKE *SEVERAL* STOPS BEFORE RETURNING TO THE PRESENT...

YOU MUST CATCH HIM AT HIS *FIRST* SUCH STOP--

"--WHICH, I BELIEVE, IS *CHICAGO*-- IN THE YEAR *1928*--

"--ONE YEAR BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF THE *GREAT DEPRESSION*--

"--A DEPRESSION WHICH WILL NOT *OCCUR*, UNLESS *YOU* CATCH OUR TIME-TRAVELER-- BEFORE HE *STOPS* IT!"

THUS, MOMENTS LATER (IN SUBJECTIVE TIME)...

BEN... WE *MADE* IT!

SCREECH!

CAN YA BEAT *THAT*? THE WATCHER WAVES A *GIZMO*--

--AN' THE NEXT TIME YA KNOW, WE'RE OUT IN *TRAFFIC!*

HEY, *YOU*-- THE JERK IN THE *ROCK COSTUME!*

I OUGHTA *BUST* YOU ONE FER WALKIN' IN FRONT'A MY *CAR*--YA COULD'A GOT ME *KILLED!*

"ROCK COSTUME," HUH?

C'MERE AN' SAY THAT, PAL-- AN' I'LL--

BEN, *NO!*

WE CAN'T *AFFORD* TO GET MIXED UP IN A STREET FIGHT-- NOT NOW!

THERE'S TOO MUCH AT *STAKE* TO--

HEY-- *MEDUSA*-- SUDDENLY, I FEEL KINDA *FUNNY*--!

--LIKE SOMEBODY WUZ USIN' MY BOD FER A *TRACK COURSE!*

WAITAMINUTE-- SOMETHIN'S *HAPPENIN'* TO ME--I'M *CHANGIN'*-- *CHANGIN'*--!

FOR SEVERAL SECONDS, THE THING'S ORANGE-SCALED FORM SEEMS TO **BLUR**...

...TO MELT AND **FLOW**, LIKE WARM **WAX** LOSING ITS FORMER SHAPE...

...UNTIL, WHERE ONCE STOOD A **MONSTER**...

...NOW STANDS A VERY BEWILDERED **MAN.**

I DON'T **BELIEVE** IT--

--I'M **BEN GRIMM** AGAIN! I'M **HUMAN**, MEDUSA! DON'T YA **SEE--I'M HUMAN!**

IT MUST'VE HAD SOMETHIN' TA DO WITH THE WATCHER'S **TIME GIZMO!**

I'M JUST LIKE I WUZ **BEFORE!**

*A BRIEF SECOND PASSES, AS MEDUSA **SHARES** BEN GRIMM'S JOY... THEN...*

PLEASE **FORGIVE** ME, BEN-- BUT WE **STILL** HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE **REASON** FOR OUR COMING HERE--

AND TO DO THAT, WE **MUST** BE LESS **ATTENTION-ATTRACTIVE!**

FINE WITH **ME**, RED.

J & B CLOTHES, Inc.

ANY **IDEAS**?

I THINK I SEE THE **ANSWER**, BEN.

FOLLOW ME...

DELIVERY ENTRANCE

SHORTLY...

WELL, MR. GRIMM? DO YOU THINK THE FASHIONS OF THE **LOST GENERATION** SUIT ME?

THEY'RE A FAIR **FIT.**

MY FRIEND, YOU'RE POSITIVELY **GALLANT.**

STILL, I **DO** FEEL GUILTY--

--EVEN THOUGH WE'RE ONLY "**BORROWING**" THESE CLOTHES, SINCE THE OWNER ISN'T HERE AT NIGHT TO MAKE OTHER, MORE **SUITABLE** ARRANGEMENTS.

DON'T LET IT **BOTHER** YA, RED. WE'RE SAVIN' THE **WORLD**, REMEMBER?

SPEAKIN' OF WHICH-- AIN'T IT TIME WE WE FIGURED OUT WHAT THE WATCHER **MEANT**?

HOW SO?

WELL-- HE SAID WE WERE HERE TA STOP THIS JERK FROM **STOPPIN'** THE DEPRESSION--

--AN' IT SEEMS TA ME THAT STOPPING THE DEPRESSION IS ACTUALLY A PRETTY GOOD IDEA!

WE CAN'T KNOW WHAT EFFECT IT WOULD HAVE ON THE FUTURE, BEN, BUT--WAIT!

THAT MAN UP AHEAD--

SEE IF HE CAN LEAD US TO A SPEAK-EASY!

A SPE--? OH, I GET IT. WOMAN'S INTUITION, HUH?

SAY, FELLA--KNOW WHERE A GUY CAN GET A DRINK?

MAYBE... FOR A FIVER.

IT'S YOURS.

THEN, MISTER--I'M YER MAN.

SOON, AFTER BEN AND MEDUSA HAVE FOLLOWED THEIR NEW-FOUND CONTACT DOWN A HALF-DOZEN GLOOMY STREETS...

YEAH? WHOIZZIT?

HARRY, WITH A GUY.

IF HARRY VOUCHES FOR YA, YA MUST BE AN ALL-RIGHT JOE.

BUT JUST IN CASE YA AIN'T, LET ME GIVE YA A LITTLE WARNIN'--

DON'T BOTHER, PAL.

I GET THE PICTURE.

BEN...IT'S INCREDIBLE...!

YEAH, LIKE SOMETHIN' OUTTA A GRADE B MOVIE! I KEEP EXPECTIN' EDWARD G. ROBINSON TA POP UP WITH A GUN IN HIS HAND...!

SO TELL ME, MEDUSA--HOWCUM YA HAD US COME HERE?

A HUNCH, BEN. AS AN INHUMAN, MY PSYCHIC SENSES ARE STRONGER THAN YOURS, AND--

HOLY COW! PSYCHIC IS RIGHT, PRETTY LADY--

LOOK!

IT'S GOTTA BE HIM--THE GUY WE'VE BEEN SEARCHIN' FOR--THE JERK WHO STUMBLED INTA OUR TIME MACHINE--

WILLIE LUMPKIN, OUR MAILMAN!*

* FROM VARIOUS ISSUES OF THE F.F.'S OWN MAG.--ROY.

C'MON, BUDDY... PLAYTIME'S OVER.

WE'RE TAKIN' YA BACK TO 1974, WHERE YA BELONG!

WHAT--?

SAY, PAL--GET YER PAWS OFF MY **BUDDY.**

THE RUNT IS ONE'A BIG AL'S BOYS, **SEE?**

HE'S GIVIN' US THE STRAIGHT DOPE ON THE **STOCK MARKET,** SEE?

SO **BEAT IT,** YA MUG-- OR WE'LL HAVE TO GET **ROUGH,** SEE?

I GOT **NEWS** FOR YA, HALF-BRAIN... **NOBODY** GETS ROUGH WITH BEN GRIMM, EVEN IF HE **AIN'T** THE BLASTED **THING--SEE?**

BOK!

YOU'VE **HAD** IT, WISE-GUY!

I'M GONNA PUMP YOU SO FULLA LEAD, IT'LL TAKE A **CRANE** TA GET YOU **OUTTA** HERE!

I'M AFRAID YOU WON'T GET THE CHANCE TO **TRY,** MY FRIEND.

YOU MAY BE QUITE SKILLED DEALING WITH A "ROARING TWENTIES" **MASHER--**

--BUT YOU'RE **HELPLESS** WHEN YOU HAVE TO FACE MEDUSA'S **LIVING TRESSES!**

BAPO!

NICE WORK, RED. LET'S GRAB LUMPKIN AN' MAKE TRACKS **OUTTA** THIS JOINT.

I'VE GOT A FEELIN' THESE GUYS AREN'T GONNA **APPRECIATE** WHAT WE'VE--

--DONE?

WELL, IF IT AIN'T **WILT CHAMBERLAIN!**

WILT **WHO--?**

FORGET IT, BUSTER--

--IT'S AN "IN" JOKE!

WHAM!

WHADDAYA **KNOW?**

HE GOT THE GAG **AFTER ALL!**

PLEASE, BEN-- WE HAVE TO *HURRY.*

WE DON'T WANT TO BE *HERE* WHEN THE WATCHER--

GOTCHA, KID.

OKAY, WILLIE-- LET'S *MOVE.*

*THREE SECONDS LATER, AS THE TRIO STEPS INTO A TYPICAL MUGGY CHICAGO **EVENING**...*

YOU KNOW, MEDUSA-- I JUST FIGURED IT *OUT.*

IF WILLIE HERE HAD *STAYED* WITH THOSE GANGSTERS--AND HAD GIVEN THEM THE *SCOOP* ON THE DEPRESSION--

--AMERICAN HISTORY WOULD HAVE CHANGED *DRAMATICALLY.*

I KNOW, BEN--*I KNOW!*

MR. GRIMM--IS IT REALLY *YOU*, SIR? ALL OF THIS IS SO *CONFUSING*-- I HARDLY *RECOGNIZED* YOU--!

THANKS FER THE *COMPLIMENT*, WILLIE.

NOW *SHUT UP* AND LET ME CHECK OUT THESE *CONTROLS!*

GOT IT! I'M USED TA *AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION*-- AND I'LL BE *BLASTED* IF I CAN MAKE THIS CLUTCH WORK SMOOTHLY-- BUT AT LEAST I'VE GOT 'ER *RUNNIN'*, MEDUSA!

AND JUST IN *TIME*, BEN--

I BELIEVE WE'RE BEING FOLLOWED!

KRAKA-

BACHOM! BACHOM!

FOLLOWED, *NUTHIN'!* *WE'RE UNDER ATTACK!*

CRAKO!

CRAKO!

PCKRAK!

GET YER HEADS DOWN, BOTH OF YA--! WE'RE GONNA--

CRASH!

BEN! ARE YOU ALL *RIGHT?* THE WAY YOUR HEAD SNAPPED *FORWARD*--!

BEN, *ANSWER ME!* BY AGON'S GENES, *ANSWER M*--

BUT, BEN GRIMM DOES NOT **ANSWER**...

AND AFTER A MOMENT, THERE NO LONGER IS ANY **NEED** FOR HIM TO DO SO...

...FOR, THE ANSWER TO MEDUSA'S QUESTION IS ALL TOO **PAINFULLY** CLEAR!

YEAH, I'M **OKAY**, MEDUSA.

I'M... JUST... SWELL.

HE GROWS **SILENT** THEN, AS HE TEARS THE CAR DOOR FROM ITS HINGES, AND LOWERS HIS MASSIVE BULK TO THE COBBLED **STREET**...

RRIPP!

HE DOESN'T **WONDER** WHY HIS BRIEF RETURN TO **NORMALCY** IS ENDED; HE'S ALREADY **ACCEPTED** THIS LATEST IN A SERIES OF BITTER TWISTS OF **FATE**...

...AND HE KNOWS WHAT HE MUST DO...FOR **REVENGE.**

H-H-HOLY **COW**, FRANKIE...WH-WHAT IN THE NAME OF H-HEAVEN IS **THAT**--?

IT-IT JUST **APPEARED** IN THAT CAR--LIKE SUMTHIN' OUTTA A **MOVIN' PICTURE!**

SH-**SHOOT** IT, EDDIE--DON'T LET IT GET **NEAR** US--

SHOOT IT!

HE SAYS NOTHING. HE WATCHES, AND SLOWLY **SMILES**...

CRAAAKKKKK

...AND THEN **ACTS**, AS ONLY ONE MAN **CAN**...THE ORANGE-SCALED MAN-MOUNTAIN...**THE THING!**

WHUMP!

BEN...I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO **SAY**...

THEN DON'T SAY **ANYTHIN'**, MEDUSA,

LET'S JUST GET BACK TA THE **PRESENT**...BEFORE I GET **SICK.**

AND, AS THOUGH THE THING'S WORDS HAVE BEEN **HEARD**, THE THREE DISPLACED TRAVELERS SEEM TO **FLICKER**...AND SLOWLY...FADE AWAY...

TIME ENOUGH FOR DEATH!

CHAPTER 4

"TIME IS THE IMAGE OF **ETERNITY**", A PHILOSOPHER NAMED **DIOGENES** SAID THAT, CIRCA 200 A.D. NO DOUBT HE MEANT TO DEAL WITH CONCEPTS MORE **PROFOUND** THAN THOSE WHICH CONCERN US HERE...BUT WE THINK DIOGENES WOULD HAVE **UNDERSTOOD** OUR HEROES' SENSE OF HORROR, AS THEY GAZE AT THE WORLD IN WHICH THEY SUDDENLY **FIND** THEMSELVES...A WORLD WHICH SEEMS **APART** FROM TIME ITSELF...

...A WORLD THAT SEEMS TO EXIST IN SOME FRIGHTENING ETERNAL **STASIS** ...SOME TERRIFYING, TIMELESS **ETERNITY**...!

REED, SOMETHING'S **WRONG!** THIS ISN'T THE WORLD WE **LEFT**--

--IT'S SOME SORT OF-- OF SALVADOR DALI **NIGHTMARE!**

HEY, RED-- AM I SEEIN' THINGS--OR IS THAT A **STOPWATCH** MELTIN' OVER THAT **TREE**?

SO IT **SEEMS**, BEN! APPARENTLY, WE'RE IN A KIND OF **CHRONAL-CONTINUUM!**

A WORLD EXISTING **OUTSIDE** THE TIME-LINE WE KNOW-- BUT OBVIOUSLY **PARALLELING** OUR OWN! IT'S SOMETHING **MAXIMUS** ONCE HYPOTHESIZED BEFORE HE WENT **MAD**--!

IF HE IMAGINED A WORLD LIKE **THIS**, MEDUSA--I CAN **UNDERSTAND** WHY HE WENT **INSANE**!

SOMEHOW, WE'VE BEEN **DRAWN** TO THIS WORLD, RATHER THAN TO OUR **OWN**-- ALL OF US APPEARING HERE **SIMULTANEOUSLY**--

--FOR REASONS *BEYOND* OUR COMPREHENSION! BUT--THIS *COULDN'T* BE THE WATCHER'S DOING--IT ISN'T HIS *WAY* TO ACT WITHOUT AN *EXPLANATION*--!

THERE HAS TO BE SOMEONE--OR *SOMETHING*-- ELSE AT WORK HERE--SOME OTHER FORCE--

--SOME OTHER *MIND!*

OH, YEAH? WELL, THAT'S JUST *DANDY.* I'VE HAD IT TO *HERE* WITH JERKS PUSHIN' ME AROUND--!

IF I LAY MY MITTS ON THE CREEP WHO *DID* THIS, I'LL--

DON'T TELL *US*, THING--TELL THE GUY *BEHIND* YOU.

LOOK!

HUH? WHO THE HECK IS *THAT*?

I AM *TEMPUS*-- AND I AM MASTER OF THE WORLD IN WHICH YOU NOW EXIST!

I AM *TEMPUS*... AND I HUNGER FOR *DEATH.*

SINCE THE BEGINNING OF ETERNITY HAVE I *REMAINED* HERE... ENDURING WITHOUT *LIFE,* ENDURING WITHOUT *GROWTH*... ENDURING AS A *ROCK* ENDURES, PASSING THROUGH THE DECADES, THROUGH THE CENTURIES, THROUGH THE *MILLENNIA*..

...EXISTING WITHOUT CHANGE, AND THUS...WITHOUT *MEANING.*

AT LAST, I HAVE HAD *ENOUGH.* TIME ITSELF HAS COME TO *BORE* ME...

AND THUS... TIME ITSELF... MUST *END.*

TO INSURE THE END OF TIME, I LURED THE HUMAN YOU CALL WILLIAM LUMPKIN INTO YOUR CHILDISH *TIME PORTAL.*

HAD MY PLAN SUCCEEDED, THE PARADOXES CAUSED BY HIS ACTIONS WOULD HAVE CLIMAXED IN TOTAL *CATASTROPHE*...BOTH ON *YOUR* TIME LEVEL... ...AND ON *MINE!*

WILLIAM LUMPKIN'S ACTIONS WOULD HAVE *UPROOTED THE TREE OF TIME*--CAUSING UNTOLD *CHAOS*--MIXING AGE AND *AGE*, EON AND *EON!*

NOW, I MUST USE *OTHER* MEANS TO ACHIEVE THAT *END.*

ESSENTIALLY--I MUST *DESTROY* YOU ALL.

OVER MY DEAD *BODY*, YA OVERGROWN *ICICLE!*

THIS IS THE *THING* YOU'RE TALKIN' TO--NOT SOME BLASTED *WRISTWATCH!*

BEN, *DON'T!*

WE HAVE NO CONCEPT OF HIS *POWER*--HIS *ABILITIES*--!

AW, *BUNK.*

THERE AIN'T *NUTHIN'* HE CAN TOSS AT ME I AIN'T *ALREADY*--*UNNNNH!*

ZAK!

LLLLIIIT!

WIND--COMIN' AT ME LIKE A CRUMMY *HURRICANE*--!

CAN'T STAND *UP* TA IT--

--BLOWIN' ME BACK--TEARIN' *INTA* ME--! WHAT'S *HAPPENIN'*--?

I'M BREAKIN' APART!

DID YOU *SEE* THAT, REED--DID YOU SEE WHAT TEMPUS *DID* TO HIM?

BEN'S BARELY *BREATHING!* HE'S GOTTEN SO *OLD*--SO *OLD!*

GET BACK, JOHNNY! YOU'RE TOO CLOSE TO THE RAY--!

BUT, REED'S FRANTIC WARNING COMES **TOO LATE**--AS JOHNNY STORM LIFTS A SUDDENLY-GRAYING HEAD, AND CRIES OUT FROM A MOUTH ABRUPTLY WITHERED AND **DRY**--

YOU'VE GOT TO **STOP** HIM, REED--YOU'VE GOT TO STOP HIM, BEFORE HE **KILLS US!**

YOU'VE GOT-- GOT TO **TRY**

I DID NOT WISH IT TO **HAPPEN** THIS WAY, HUMAN.

THERE IS NO **GRACE** IN SUCH AN ENDING... NO TRAGEDY, ONLY **PATHOS.**

YOU'RE **MAD,** TEMPUS! **INSANE!**

IF I DON'T STOP YOU-- ONE OF THE OTHERS **WILL!**

WHICH OF THEM, HUMAN? WHICH WILL HAVE THE **STRENGTH**--WHEN THE VERY ESSENCE OF HIS **LIFE** IS DRAWN FROM HIS BODY, AS A LEECH DRAWS ITS VICTIM'S **BLOOD**?

WOULD IT NOT BE BETTER FOR YOU TO **ACCEPT** YOUR FATE?

ZZIII!

IS LIFE SO **PRECIOUS**--IS EXISTENCE SO **DEAR**-- THAT ONE MUST CLING TO IT SO **DESPERATELY**?

YES! NO MATTER **WHAT** HAPPENS--

--WE **MUST** GO ON! WE **MUST**--

--GO ON :

WE WILL, REED! ON MY OATH AS AN **INHUMAN**--

WE WILL!

*YET, AT THAT PRECISE **INSTANT,** AS REED COLLAPSES AGAINST MEDUSA'S RESTRAINING **LOCKS**...*

HUH? I DON'T **GET** IT... ONE MOMENT I CAN HARDLY LIFT MY **PINKY**...

...AND THE **NEXT,** I'M MY BEAUTIFUL-BLUE-EYED **SELF** AGAIN!

YOU'RE NOT THE **ONLY** ONE, PARTNER!

WE'RE **BOTH** BACK TO NORMAL-- BUT LOOK AT **REED AND MEDUSA!**

"THEY'RE AS OLD AS **WE** WERE... AND GROWING OLDER BY THE **SECOND!** THEY CAN'T LAST MUCH **LONGER**, BEN... WE HAVE TO **DO** SOMETHING, BEFORE THEY DIE FROM SHEER **OLD AGE!**

"THE ONLY TROUBLE IS--I CAN'T FIGURE OUT **WHAT!**"

THEN YA AIN'T GOT THE BRAINS I **THOUGHT** YA HAD, TORCHIE!

DON'TCHA **SEE**? TEMPUS CAN ONLY KEEP **TWO** OF US AGEIN' AT A **TIME!**

ALL WE GOTTA DO IS **DISTRACT** HIM--MAKE HIM TAKE THOSE **EYE-BEAMS** OFF STRETCHO AND RED--

--AND THEN IT'LL BE **OUR** TURN!

I'M **READING** YOU, OLD BUDDY! I'LL HIT HIM **HIGH**--

--AND YOU HIT HIM **LOW!**

YOU BETTER **BELIEVE** I'LL HIT HIM LOW, TORCHIE!

I FIGURE THIS JOKER'S BEHIND MY BECOMING **BEN GRIMM**--AND THEN SWITCHING ME BACK TA **THE THING**--AND THAT MAKES ME **MAD**, WHICH MEANS--

IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!

KA-POW!

I SEE IT, BUT I DON'T *BELIEVE* IT!

ONE'A MY BEST PUNCHES, AND THE GUY JUST *VIBRATES* A BIT--

--AN' STILL *STANDS* THERE LIKE THE BLASTED *KING'A THE HILL!*

WELL, DON'T *YOU* JUST STAND THERE, THING!

HIT HIM *AGAIN*-- BEFORE HE *THROWS* ME!

WAIT! YOU MUSTN'T STRIKE HIM, BEN--UNDER ANY *CIRCUMSTANCES!*

HE'LL *USE* YOUR ENERGY AGAINST YOU--FEEDING IT *BACK* LIKE AN ELECTRICAL *CIRCUIT!*

WE'LL HAVE TO COME UP WITH A *BETTER WAY!*

EEYOWWW!

COME UP WITH IT *SOON*, BROTHER-IN-LAW-- I THINK WE'VE GOTTEN PRICKLY-FACE *MAD!*

ANGER IS FOR *MORTALS*, YOU FOOL.

TEMPUS FEELS NO ANGER-- ONLY *BOREDOM.*

AND IT IS THIS BOREDOM WHICH HE DESIRES TO *END.*

IS IT SO *HARD* FOR YOU TO *UNDERSTAND* SUCH A WISH?

ARE YOU ALL SO HOPELESSLY *BLIND?*

WHAT DO *YOUR* PETTY LIVES MATTER, WHEN COMPARED TO AN ETERNITY WITHOUT *MEANING?* I HAVE SUFFERED *LONG ENOUGH*--

--I HAVE *WATCHED* THE FLOW OF TIME, AND I AM-- *WHAT ARE YOU DOING?*

HANDSOME, WE THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER *ASK!*

WHILE YOU WERE BUSY ***RANTING***, TEMPUS, MY FRIENDS AND I WORKED OUT A ***PLAN***.

NOT A VERY ***SOPHISTICATED*** PLAN, I ADMIT--BUT A ***WORKABLE*** ONE, NONETHELESS!

RELEASE ME, YOU ABYSMALLY STUPID ***CLOWN!***

RELEASE ME AT ONCE!

AS I SAY, NOT A SOPHISTICATED PLAN--BUT THE WAY WE SAW IT, SINCE YOU WANTED TO DESTROY YOURSELF SO ***BADLY***-- YOU WOULDN'T REALLY MIND ***HOW*** YOU WENT, WOULD YOU?

THIS METHOD IS BASED ON AN OLD EARTH ***ADAGE*** EACH OF US LEARNED AS A ***CHILD***.

DO YOU ***REMEMBER*** IT, JOHNNY?

I SURE ***DO***, REED... IF IT'S THE ONE I THINK YOU ***MEAN***:

DOESN'T IT GO SOMETHING LIKE--***"THE BIGGER THEY ARE--THE HARDER THEY FALL"***?

SOMETHING LIKE THAT, JOHNNY.

SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

NOOO...

BARASH!

AND, WHEN THE RUBBLE HAS SETTLED, AND THE DUST HAS CEASED TO **FLY**...

GONE... **FINISHED**...

IT'S ALMOST AS THOUGH HE NEVER TRULY **EXISTED**.

STILL--HE **DID** EXIST, AND WE HAVE TO **REMEMBER** THAT. WE HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT A PART OF TEMPUS STILL EXISTS IN **EACH** OF US--

--AND THAT **HIS** KIND OF DESPAIR NEVER REALLY DIES, ONLY **SLEEPS**-- UNTIL SOMETHING HAPPENS TO **WAKEN** IT ONCE MORE.

I HATE TO INTERRUPT YER PRETTY **SPEECH**, STRETCHO--

--BUT SOMETHIN' TELLS ME OUR TROUBLES AIN'T **OVER**--BY A **LONG SHOT!**

NO SOONER HAS BEN GRIMM FINISHED SPEAKING, THAN THE WORLD SEEMS TO SHUDDER AND **HEAVE** AROUND HIM--THE LAND SPLITTING AND **SINKING**, TILTING AT IRRATIONAL ANGLES, CANTING WILDLY, **MADLY**--!

FOR LONG SECONDS, THIS **WORLD-QUAKE** CONTINUES--GROWING MORE AND MORE DANGEROUS, UNTIL THE FANTASTIC FOUR FIND THEMSELVES FIGHTING NOT JUST FOR THEIR **BALANCE--BUT FOR THEIR LIVES!**

WHAT **IS** IT, HIGH-POCKETS? WHAT'S **GOIN' ON?**

I CAN ONLY **GUESS**, BEN--BUT IT SEEMS SAFE TO ASSUME THIS WORLD REALLY **WAS** TIED TO TEMPUS--

--AND THAT WHEN **HE** SUCCUMBED-- IT **DIED WITH HIM!**

SPEAK **ENGLISH**, YA BLASTED **BOOKWORM!** WHAT DOES **THAT** MEAN?

IT MEANS WE'RE IN THE MIDST OF THIS WORLD'S **DEATH THROES**--AND THAT IF WE DON'T ESCAPE **SOON, WE'LL NEVER ESCAPE ALIVE!**

RRUMMMBLLE...!!

IN THAT CASE, STRETCH-- IT'S BEEN NICE *KNOWIN'* YA.

YOU *TOO*, MEDUSA. AN' JOHNNY, I ALWAYS-- *HUH?*

NOW WHAT? CAN'T A GUY EVEN SAY *GOODBYE* IN PEACE AROUND HERE?

OLD FRIEND--I'VE A FEELING YOUR FAREWELLS MIGHT HAVE BEEN *PREMATURE.*

THIS *PATHWAY* THROUGH TIME--DOESN'T IT SEEM *FAMILIAR* SOMEHOW?

IT'S THE REVERSE OF THE WAY WE *CAME!*

WE'RE GOING *BACK* TO THE PRESENT--! BUT--WHAT WILL WE *FIND?* A PREHISTORIC *JUNGLE*, OR--?

THE BAXTER BUILDING!

THEN WE *SUCCEEDED!* TEMPUS *FAILED*--THE WORLD ISN'T DESTROYED, AND EVERYTHING'S BACK AS IT WAS BEFORE WILLIE LUMPKIN FELL INTO DOC DOOM'S *TIME MACHINE!*

THEN, ALL OF THIS *WAS* MY FAULT? IT *WASN'T* JUST A DREAM?

IF IT *WUZ*, THEN WE ALL HAD THE SAME *NIGHTMARE*, WILLIE-BOY.

AND IF YA DON'T BELIEVE ME--ASK THE *WATCHER* OVER THERE!

I ASSURE YOU, MR. LUMPKIN... THIS WAS *NO DREAM.* IT WAS *ALL* TERRIBLY REAL... AND ALMOST CATASTROPHIC, TO USE THE TERM *TEMPUS* EMPLOYED.

SO YA KNEW ABOUT THAT TEMPUS JOKER ALL *ALONG*, HUH?

OF COURSE. AM I NOT *THE WATCHER?*

IF YOU *KNEW*-- WHY DIDN'T YOU *WARN* US?

FOR THE SAME REASON THAT I KNEW...

...BECAUSE I AM A WATCHER, AND A WATCHER MAY ULTIMATELY ONLY *OBSERVE.*

I BROKE MY OATH *ONCE*, IN INFORMING YOU OF THE DISASTER, AND HELPING YOU *CORRECT* CERTAIN MISTAKES.

TO DO MORE WOULD HAVE BEEN A TRULY *GRAVE* OFFENSE AGAINST MY OATH-- AND SO, I REMAINED *SILENT.*

JUST AS *YOU* MUST REMAIN SILENT, WILLIAM LUMPKIN.

THE WORLD IS AS IT *WAS* BEFORE *YOU* CHANGED IT--AND IT MUST NEVER KNOW THE *TRUTH* OF WHAT ALMOST HAPPENED THIS DAY.

I-I'LL NEVER TELL, UH, MR. WATCHER, SIR--!

AND *TOMORROW*?

WHAT WILL YOU SAY *THEN*?

NO, WILLIAM, IT IS BETTER THAT THE MEMORY BE WIPED FROM YOUR *MIND*.

ONLY THEN WILL YOU BE SAFE FROM *TEMPTATION*--

--AND THE WORLD, SAFE FROM *YOU*.

DONE.

THUS, MY BUSINESS HERE IS *ENDED*, AND I TAKE MY *LEAVE*--

--FOR THERE ARE *OTHER* WORLDS TO WATCH--

"--AND A WATCHER MUST OBSERVE ...THEM ALL."

SAY, WILLIE-- DON'TCHA HAVE SOME *LETTERS* YA GOTTA DELIVER SOMEWHERE?

LETTERS? OH, YES... THE *LETTERS!* I CAN'T *UNDERSTAND* IT, MR. GRIMM--IT'S ODD, BUT I SEEM TO HAVE *FORGOTTEN* WHY I CAME UP HERE THIS AFTERNOON!

I MADE MY *REGULAR* DELIVERY THIS MORNING, YOU SEE--

--BUT HERE IT IS ALMOST *FIVE O'CLOCK*, AND FOR SOME REASON I CAN'T RECALL, I'M BACK *HERE!* A SPECIAL DELIVERY PACKAGE? NO, I DON'T *THINK* SO. A REGISTERED LETTER, PERHAPS...?

...IT'LL *COME* TO ME, SOONER OR LATER. IT'LL COME BACK, JUST YOU WAIT AND *SEE*.

NO, NOT THAT *EITHER*. BUT DON'T *WORRY*...

HOW MUCH YOU WANT TO BET IT *DOESN'T*, BEN?

NO *BET*, TORCHIE. SAY... *I* JUST REMEMBERED...

WHAT ABOUT THAT *SUB-ORBITAL SHUTTLECRAFT* WE LEFT IN THE MIDDLE OF THAT FLORIDA *SWAMPLAND*?

WHO D'YA SUPPOSE IS GONNA HAVE TA PAY THE BILL TA TRUCK THAT CRATE BACK TA *CAPE CANAVERAL*?

TEMPUS... WILLIE LUMPKIN ...OR *ME*?

NEXT

THE 4 HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE!

AVENGERS

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EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES!

the AVENGERS®

TM

THE FANTASTIC FOUR! THE INHUMANS! TAKE IT FROM US, THIS ONE'S GOT IT ALL!!

HAVOC IN HIDDEN THE LAND!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY AVENGERS!®

STEVE ENGLEHART story | SAL BUSCEMA & JOE STATON art | TOM ORZECHOWSKI, lettering / STEVE ENGLEHART, coloring | ROY THOMAS editor

AH, "... AND WHAT IS SO RARE AS A DAY IN JUNE?"

THE ANSWER, OF COURSE, IS THIS LUSCIOUS FOWL!

THERE'S NOT A FINER TOM TURKEY TO BE FOUND IN NEW YORK, AND AFTER FIVE HOURS OF METICULOUS PREPARATION--

--THE AVENGERS WILL BE SO--

HUH?

"HUH?" INDEED, JARVIS-- FOR NOT EVEN A BRONX-BORN BUTLER, INURED TO THE INCREDIBLE BY BOTH MANHATTAN AND THE MIGHTY AVENGERS--

--CAN BE PREPARED FOR A MAN AND A DOG MATERIALIZING IN FRONT OF HIS BIRD!

GORGON-- AND LOCKJAW, OF THE INHUMANS!

WHAT CAN THIS MEAN?

BRIDE and DOOM!

SO, MY FRIENDS--HAVE I ARRIVED TOO EARLY, THEN? WHY AREN'T YOU PREPARED TO DEPART--

--FOR THE WEDDING?

WEDDING? WHAT WEDDING MIGHT THAT BE, GORGON?

UN-LESS--UNLESS YOU SPEAK OF--

--QUICKSILVER, THE ONE YOU CALL PIETRO--AND MY LITTLE COUSIN, CRYSTAL!

OF COURSE.

BUT OBVIOUSLY, THE AVENGERS DON'T SEE THIS AS A MATTER OF COURSE.

PARTICULARLY NOT--THE SCARLET WITCH!

PIETRO--MY OWN BROTHER! HE SWORE NEVER TO SPEAK TO ME AGAIN--*

-- NOT WHILE YOU LOVE THAT ANDROID!

*ISH #110.-- ROY.

--BUT HOW COULD I SUSPECT HE WOULDN'T INVITE ME TO HIS MARRIAGE?

AND THEN DARKER THOUGHTS INTRUDE--OF THE ROCKY ROAD HER LOVE FOR THE VISION HAS TRAVELED SINCE QUICK-SILVER'S ULTIMATUM...

...THE ARGUMENTS --THE JEALOUSY OVER MANTIS--

--THE INEVITABLE CHASM THAT HAS COME TO YAWN BETWEEN THEM, FORCING THIS ONCE-CLOSE COUPLE APART!

ALL THAT SHE HAS COPED WITH, A DAY AT A TIME AS IT HAP-PENED, BUT THIS--

--THIS IS TOO MUCH!

YOU DID NOT KNOW! IT WAS ARRANGED FOR THAT ARROGANT, POSTURING FOOL TO NOTIFY YOU--

--BUT YOU DID NOT KNOW!

BLAM!

IN THE **PAST**, THE THUNDERING HOOVES OF THIS INAPPROPRIATELY-NAMED INHUMAN HAVE CAUSED CHASMS--AS IN **EARTHQUAKES!**

NOW THEY **EASILY** SHUDDER THIS SPRAWLING **MANSION!**

TRULY, THESE HOOVES ARE **WONDERS TO BEHOLD--**

--BUT IF THE BUILDING IS TO **SURVIVE** GORGON'S RAGE--

--THEY ARE ALSO WONDERS TO BE **HELD!**

NICE **GOING,** IRON MAN!

ZOT!

BLAST YOU, I'VE ENDURED A **GREAT DEAL** FROM QUICKSILVER FOR MY COUSIN'S SAKE-- ENDURED IT FOR **MANY MONTHS--**

--BUT I **WON'T** ENDURE THIS **FINAL** INSOLENCE!

IF YOU PLAN TO TAKE **HIS** SIDE, AVENGER, I'LL SMASH YOU AS **WELL!**

NO ONE TAKES **ANYONE'S** SIDE, GORGON. YOUR FRUSTRATION MAY WELL BE **JUSTIFIED...**

...YET YOU MUST NOT VENT IT UPON OUR **HOUSE!**

THIS IS THE **AVENGERS'** HOUSE, MANTIS. YOU'RE HERE MERELY AS A COURTESY TO THE **SWORDSMAN!**

BUT LET IT PASS.

GORGON-- WE'LL GO TO THE WEDDING **ANYWAY!**

HEAD HELD **HIGH**, EYES **DRY** BUT **SMARTING**, WANDA WALKS RAPIDLY FROM THE **ROOM**.

WHILE AT THAT **SAME MOMENT**, IN THE FARAWAY HIDEAWAY OF THE INHUMAN DUBBED **MAXIMUS THE MAD**...

FINALLY!

YOU ARE **WELL MET**, EVIL ONE!

THEY SAY I'M **INSANE**, BECAUSE **BLACK BOLT**, MY CURSED **BROTHER**, RULES THE GREAT REFUGE INSTEAD OF **ME**! BUT WITH **YOU** AS MY ALLY, ALL THAT WILL **CHANGE**!

WITH **YOU** AS MY ALLY--

ZLAM

--YOU REQUIRE NO **ENEMIES**, FOOL!

CUT TO: SOMETIME **LATER**, **ABOVE** THE AFOREMENTIONED GREAT REFUGE--

--AND LET US FOLLOW THIS QUINJET **DOWN**--

--UNTIL IT SCREAMS TO A **HALT** IN THE **HEART** OF THIS HIDDEN WONDERLAND--

--AND THE **AVENGERS** DEBARK.

THERE, BEFORE THEM, ARE THOSE **ALREADY** ARRIVED--

--THE TWO **FOREMOST FAMILIES** OF THE MODERN HEROIC AGE.

FIRST, THAT OF **REED RICHARDS, MR. FANTASTIC**, WHICH, ALONG WITH AN EVER-CHANGING NUMBER OF **FRIENDS**, MAKES UP THE **FANTASTIC FOUR**.

AND SECOND, THAT OF **BLACK BOLT**, WHICH CONSTITUTES THE **ROYAL HOUSE** OF THE **INHUMANS**.

THEN: GREETINGS!

CRYSTAL! HOW WONDERFUL TO MEET YOU AT LAST!

THE SAME GOES FOR ME, WANDA!

I'VE WONDERED SO MUCH ABOUT YOU!

BUT HASN'T PIETRO TOLD YOU?

WHY, WHERE IS PIETRO?

HE... DID NOT WISH TO COME, WANDA. WHEN GORGON RADIOED THAT YOU WOULD ALL BE FLYING HERE...

... HE... UH... DECIDED TO SEE TO THE WEDDING PREPARATIONS.

I... UNDERSTAND, CRYSTAL.

HERE, NOW-- IS THIS A WEDDING OR A WAKE?

AVENGERS, I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE MISS AGATHA HARKNESS, WHO CARES FOR MY SON FRANKLIN-- AND YOU KNOW MADAME MEDUSA.

SHE'S BECOME AN UNOFFICIAL MEMBER OF OUR TEAM.

PARDON THIS ONE, IF YOU PLEASE, MR. RICHARDS--

--BUT COULD SOMEONE PLEASE EXPLAIN THE PURPOSE OF THAT STATUE? IT SEEMS OUT OF PLACE IN THIS SPOT...

...AND SINISTER!

I CAN ANSWER THAT ONE, MANTIS.

ITS NAME WAS OMEGA--

--A PRODUCT OF THE CRAZED GENIUS OF OUR COUSIN, MAXIMUS. LAST YEAR, HE INVENTED A MACHINE TO HARNESS OUR SECRET GUILT OVER THE LONG-STANDING ENSLAVEMENT OF THE INHUMANS CALLED ALPHA PRIMITIVES.*

*REMEMBER-- FROM F.F. #131-132? --RASCALLY ROY.

THE GUILT POWERED OMEGA AS HE LED THE ALPHAS IN REVOLT AGAINST US.

AND THE GREAT REFUGE NEARLY FELL BEFORE WE DISCOVERED WHAT DROVE THE CREATURE, AND WE CONQUERED OUR PREJUDICE!

IN THAT MOMENT, OMEGA WAS CONQUERED.

SINCE THEN, AVENGERS, BLACK BOLT HAS INSTITUTED MANY REFORMS...

...SO THAT TODAY, EVERY INHUMAN IS AN EQUAL.

WHILE, NOT MORE THAN **TWENTY YARDS** BENEATH THEIR FEET...

REPORT, RN-62.

YOU ARE NOT MAXIMUS--

--YET IF YOU WEREN'T HE WHOSE COMING MAXIMUS **PREDICTED,** YOU WOULD NOT BE AT THIS SPOT KNOWN **ONLY** TO MAXIMUS AND MYSELF!

SO I'LL REPORT **THIS,** HOODED ONE:

WE RENEGADE ALPHAS WISH TO **BEGIN!**

AS DO **I,** RN-62-- AND NOW THAT THE **MIGHTY AVENGERS** HAVE ARRIVED, THERE IS NO FURTHER NECESSITY FOR **DELAY!**

GO! BE READY!

I SHALL STRIKE WITHIN **MINUTES!**

ABOVE, LATE AFTERNOON **SUNLIGHT** SLANTS OVER THE MOUNTAINS, FILTERED TO A **GOLDEN GLOW** BY THE PERPETUAL **CLOUD COVER**--

--LENDING AN **UNREAL,** ETHEREALLY **BEAUTIFUL** ACCENT TO THE WORLD WITHIN THE GREAT REFUGE.

SWEET **MUSIC** FILLS THE AIR, AND A **MULTITUDE** OF JOYOUS PEOPLE **LAUGH,** AND **CHEER,** AND **PLAY** FOR CRYSTAL...

...WHO STILL HAS NO **FIANCÉ** BY HER SIDE.

UNFORTUNATELY, OUR UNSEEN **VILLAIN** IS PLAYING FOR **KEEPS!**

HEY! WHERE'RE **YOU** GUYS GOIN'?

WE GO-- TO **KILL**--

--TO KILL **ALPHA PRIMITIVES!**

WOW

TOO LONG-- THEY HAVE CROWDED THEIR **SUPERIORS!** TOO LONG-- THEY HAVE BURROWED-- LIKE **RATS!**

THIS DAY-- THEY **DIE** LIKE RATS!

C'MERE, THOR! GIMME A HAND WITH YER **BUDDY!**

THIS GALVANIZED GOOFBALL'S FLIPPED HIS **HEADPIECE!**

I **CANNOT** ACCEPT THAT, THING -- AND NEITHER CANST **THOU!** IRON MAN DOTH MOVE AND SPEAK AS IF **DAZED**-- AS IF **CONTROLLED!**

YET DAZED OR **NO,** HE DOTH BID FAIR TO BREAK **FREE!**

THAT'S THE TROUBLE WITH RELYING ON **MUSCLE,** THUNDER GOD!

LUCKILY, **SUE RICHARDS** CAN STILL PROJECT HER **FORCE FIELD**-- AND IT SHOULD HOLD **MEDUSA**--

--**QUITE** NICELY!

FOR HOW **LONG,** SUZIE? WE **ALL** GOTTA LET UP SOMETIME. **HEY!**

NOW WHAT'S HE UP TO?

MEDUSA, **TOO**-- THEY'RE **COLLAPSING!**

CATCH HER, REED!

'TIS NOT **DECEPTION!** THEY BE **TRULY UNCONSCIOUS!**

BUT **WHY?**

WHY? BECAUSE THEY'VE COMPLETED THE TASK SET FOR THEM BY THEIR **HOST!**

SAY ON, RN-62!

DESPITE HIS **"REFORMS,"** BLACK BOLT WANTS US **DEAD,** BROTHERS.

THIS IS **CLEARLY** PREMEDITATED **GENOCIDE**-- AND WE ALPHAS HOLD YOU CLEARLY **RESPONSIBLE**--

--BLACK BOLT!

AND, EVEN IF HE **DARED** SPEAK...

...HE WOULD HAVE **NOTHING** TO SAY IN REPLY.

BUT LATE INTO THE SOMBRE EVENING, THE INHUMANS' SILENT LEADER CONDUCTS-- IN HIS OWN **WAY**-- A **MEETING OF MINDS** ON THE GRIM ENIGMA.

NATURALLY, NO ONE **BELIEVES** RN-62'S WILD CHARGES-- NO ONE **HERE**--

--BUT BLACK BOLT HEARS NO **OTHER** ANSWERS.

AND **ELSEWHERE** IN ATTILAN, **OTHER** URGENT COLLOQUIES ARE TAKING PLACE...

...ALL OF THEM IN-VOLVING **CRYSTAL**, AS WE SHALL SEE...

PIETRO-- DEAREST-- OUR CEREMONY WILL BE **TOMORROW**, UNLESS SOME **NEW** DISASTER OCCURS.

BEFORE THAT TIME, COULD YOU NOT **RECONCILE** WITH YOUR SISTER?

NO, MY BELOVED-- AND YOU MUST NOT ASK ME **AGAIN**!

WANDA REFUSED TO **OBEY** ME, HER OWN **BROTHER**!

WHICH IS NOT THE WAY THINGS WERE **DONE** IN OUR BALKAN **HOMELAND**, **IS** IT, PIETRO?

EH?

SISTERS NEVER **DEMANDED** THAT THEIR BROTHERS **SPEAK** WITH THEM, **EITHER**.

WANDA, I-- OH, **NEVER MIND**! CRYSTAL--

YES, PIETRO. I'M **GOING**.

NOW, PIETRO-- CAN WE DIS-CUSS MY **LOVE LIFE** LIKE TWO **CIVILIZED ADULTS**, BROTHER AND SISTER **TOGETHER**?

NO! NOT IF YOUR SO-CALLED LOVE LIFE INCLUDES THE **VISION**!

YOU MAY THINK IT CIVILIZED TO CONSORT WITH A MACHINE-- BUT **I** DO **NOT**-- AND NO **TRUE** SISTER OF MINE WOULD FEEL **DIFFERENTLY**!

NOW, IF THAT WAS **ALL** YOU WISHED TO DISCUSS--

OUTSIDE, A SOLITARY FIGURE IDLY REGISTERS PIETRO'S STRIDENT TONES--BUT THEN--

CRYS! I THOUGHT YOU'D BE ASLEEP BY NOW!

OH! JOHNNY! I DIDN'T EXPECT ANYONE TO BE HERE!

I KNOW, CRYS--BUT I'M GLAD WE MET!

WE HAVEN'T HAD A CHANCE TO TALK, AND I'VE BEEN WANTING TO TELL YOU--

--I WISH YOU ALL THE BEST!

HECK, I'LL NEVER FORGET WHAT WE HAD--

--BUT IF YOU'RE HAPPY, THAT'S GOOD BY ME!

YET--AM I HAPPY, JOHNNY?

LOVERS OFTEN AREN'T, CRYSTAL--SAD AS IT IS TO SAY.

MANTIS, I'VE GOT TO KNOW! YOU'VE GOT TO TELL ME--

--IS IT ME YOU LOVE, OR THE VISION?

YOU DEMAND AN ANSWER, SWORDSMAN?

THIS ONE CANNOT EVEN BE CERTAIN OF WHO SHE MAY BE--WHETHER SAIGON STREET ORPHAN OR CUNNINGLY-TRAINED PRIESTESS--

--OR SOMETHING ELSE, AS YET UNKNOWN.

AND YOU DEMAND HER FEELINGS?

IF THIS ONE KNEW HERSELF, SHE MIGHT TELL YOU WHAT SHE KNEW, BUT--

SSST! THERE WALKS CRYSTAL!

LET NOT OUR PROBLEMS DISTURB HER FINAL NIGHT AS A MAIDEN!

EASY FOR--HEY!

CRYSTAL--WATCH OUT!

WHAT? WHO--?

BY THE AWESOME GENES OF AGON!

OMEGA-- COME TO LIFE ONCE MORE!

AND HE'S AFTER MEEEeeeeee

STUNNED, THE TWO EYE-WITNESSES ARE FORCED TO BE NO **MORE** THAN THAT, AS THE SILENT GIANT LUMBERS INTO THE **GLOOM**--

--FOR THEY ARE **FAR** ABOVE THE PAVEMENT, AND NEITHER ONE CAN **FLY!**

THEY CAN ONLY SPREAD THE **ALARM!**

SAID **ALARM**, TO COIN A CLICHÉ, SPREADS LIKE **WILD-FIRE**-- BUT SO DOES THE LOWERING SENSE OF **MYSTERY**. WHOSE HAND **DIRECTS** THIS SUBTLE SEQUENCE OF THE **BIZARRE** AND THE **TERRIFYING?**

THE GREATEST ASSEMBLAGE OF SUPER-HEROES SINCE THE **AVENGERS/DEFENDERS** CLASH IS **DETERMINED** TO **FIND OUT!**

BLACK BOLT VIEWS THE SITUATION AS FOLLOWS: THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR OMEGA'S OTHER AWAKENING MUST BE QUESTIONED. YET THE ALPHAS MIGHT RESENT US INHUMANS--

--OR THE F.F., SINCE THEY WERE ALLIED WITH US THEN.

THUS, OUR MONARCH ASKS THE AVENGERS FOR AID.

SO BE IT, TRITON! THE AVENGERS ART HIS TO COMMAND!

BLACK BOLT NODS.

WAIT! THIS FORMER AVENGER WILL ACCOMPANY YOU, THOR--

--IF YOU'LL PERMIT IT.

COME THEN, PIETRO! ONCE AN AVENGER, ALWAYS AN AVENGER!

MEANWHILE, THE REST OF US WEDDIN' GUESTS GET TA VISIT MAXIMUS, THE CROWN CRACKPOT, AGAIN!

SHEESH, YA'D THINK IT WUZ MAX WHO INVITED US HERE!

BEN!

BEN GRIMM'S ANGER IS JUSTIFIED. BUT AGAINST THE LIFE OF HIS BROTHER, BLACK BOLT MUST WEIGH THE SECURITY OF OUR PEOPLE!

A TERRIBLE CHOICE--AN INHUMAN CHOICE--

--PARTICULARLY FOR A MAN WHO DARES NOT SPEAK, AND THUS CAN ONLY WITH DIFFICULTY SEEK COUNCIL FROM HIS FRIENDS.

HECK, REED CAN TALK, AN' HE DON'T ASK FOR ADVICE--

--WHICH THE BASHFUL, BLUE-EYED THING WOULD BE HAPPY TO--

HOLY HANNAH!

IT CAN'T BE! I WAS SURE MAXIMUS WAS BEHIND ALL THIS--

--BUT HE'S BEEN CUT DOWN, TOO!

IN ALL THE VASTNESS OF THIS PRISON, THERE IS NAUGHT BUT SHIMMERING, DESOLATE SILENCE... AND THE LEATHERN CREAK OF THE THING'S JAW FALLING.

THE ALPHAS, WHERE THE MURMER OF DISCONTENT FILLS THE AIR.

YOU BELIEVE WE ROUSED OMEGA?

AHHH... THE VIBRATIONS WITHIN THIS SPACE! THEY ARE SO ANTAGONISTIC-- HOSTILE.

THIS ONE'S HEAD THROBS..!

ALL OF THE ALPHAS FEEL AS I DO, HUMAN! I'VE BEEN SPEAKING WITH THEM FOR WEEKS!

WE'VE HAD ENOUGH OF BLACK BOLT'S REPRESSION!

YOU SPEW SLOGANS WHILE MY FIANCÉE'S LIFE IS THREATENED? YOU POSTURING FOOL--

--LEARN WHAT IT MEANS TO MOCK--

--QUICKSILVER!

POK!

BAM!

YET EVEN AS THE MUTANT MERCURY FLASHES TOWARD A SECOND GROUP OF ALPHAS, ANOTHER FORM IS IN MOTION--

--AND WHERE OTHERS CAN HARDLY SEE HIM, MANTIS BRINGS HIM DOWN!

BUT--

HE WILL NOT AWAKEN! MANTIS, THOU DIDST STRIKE TOO HARD!

IMPOSSIBLE! THIS ONE KNOWS BETTER!

IT COULD NOT HAVE B-- BEEN-- OHHHH

JUST LIKE IRON MAN AND MEDUSA!

SHE'S OUT, TOO!

ANY MORE REASONING WILL HAVE TO COME LATER, WANDA--FOR HERE IN THE BURROWS, UNREASON HAS WON THE DAY!

MADDENED BY QUICKSILVER'S ASSAULT, THE ALPHA PRIMITIVES ATTACK!

THE CRY OF "AVENGERS ASSEMBLE" COULD THUNDER THE AIR NOW, BUT SUCH IS NOT THEIR WAY! THEY KNOW THE ALPHAS ARE PAWNS, AS MUCH AS THEY--

--SO THE AVENGERS GATHER THEIR WOUNDED AND RETREAT, STILL STRIVING TO AVOID A WAR!

ALAS, IT IS NOT TO BE!

I WISH I'D STUDIED MEDI-CINE AS WELL AS PHYSICS!

MAXIMUS SEEMS IN A STATE LIKE MEDUSA'S AND IRON MAN'S.

BUT I'LL BE DARNED IF I KNOW WHY! IF...

HOLD, REED RICHARDS! LOOK-- BURSTING FROM THE CATACOMBS--!

GET READY! THE ALPHA PRIMITIVES ARE RIGHT BEHIND US!

MAXIMUS!

SO THE SLAVES-- RISE AGAINST-- THEIR RIGHTFUL MASTERS, DO THEY?

HE TALKS LIKE MEDUSA DID!

IF THESE HUDDLED MASSES-- THINK ONLY HUMANS--MUTANTS-- AND TURNCOATS-- DESPISE THEIR ANTLIKE HORDES--

--LET THEM KNOW-- WHAT THEIR RULERS-- THINK OF THEM!

THAT WEAPON HE GRABBED-- HE'S MOWING THEM DOWN WITH IT!

WE HAVE TO STOP HIM!

FLAME ON!

FOOM!
NO, JOHNNY STORM--
--IT IS RATHER-- YOU WHO SHALL BE STOPPED!
THE TORCH NOVA'D WHEN HE WAS HIT, BUT HE PULLED OUT OF HIS FALL! HE'S DOWN, BUT HE'S NOT DEAD!
AND WHILE MAXIMUS IS STILL LOOKING SKYWARD--!
ZOT!
THE RECOIL IN HIS HAND SPARKS JUBILATION IN THE SWORDSMAN-- A FEELING OF HAVING LIVED UP TO THE AVENGERS' STANDARDS.
A RARE AND HEADY FEELING--
--BUT AS IT PEAKS, STARK DARKNESS BURSTS INSIDE HIS BRAIN! WITH A SINGLE, DESPAIRING GROAN...
...HE FALLS.
HE IS NOT EVEN NOTICED IN THE THRONGING CONFUSION!
AND NOW, WAR IS UNAVOIDABLE!
POUNDING, RAGING, SCREAMING, BRUISING, WAR IS EVERYWHERE!
AND THIS WAR HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN!
REED-- WHERE'S FRANKLIN? DID MISS HARKNESS GET HIM TO SAFETY? I HAVE TO KNOW!
OH NO!

SUE STORM RICHARDS HAS NEVER **SEEN** THE FULL, UNFETTERED FURY OF THE AMAZING, COLOSSAL MAN-MONSTER CALLED **OMEGA**--JUST AS THE **AVENGERS** HAVE NEVER FELT THE HIDDEN LAND ROCK BENEATH THEIR BOOTS AT HIS **TREAD**.

BUT IN THE SENSES-STUNNING INSTANT THAT THEY **DO**, THEY UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS NO MERE **ENEMY** THEY FACE, TO BE **OPPOSED** AND **OVERWHELMED** LIKE SO MANY **OTHER** ENEMIES IN THE PAST!

THIS IS **OMEGA**--

Ω

RRAK!

-- AND HE IS THE **SUM** OF THE **HATE** OF A **HORDE**!

AND THE **ALPHAS' ATTACK** CONTINUES, IN THE VERY **SHADOW** OF THEIR ENORMOUS ALLY--

--AND THE EARLIER MIND-WAR **ALSO** CONTINUES!

IN THE **MIDST** OF THEIR COMBAT, **KARNAK** AND **TRITON** SUDDENLY SUCCUMB TO UNCONSCIOUSNESS--

--LEAVING THOSE OF THEIR FRIENDS WHO **REMAIN** THAT MUCH MORE **SORELY BESET,** THAT MUCH MORE **CERTAINLY OUTNUMBERED!**

ONLY THE **VISION** SPOTS A GLIMMER OF THE **TRUTH!**

ALL THIS SEEMS **FAMILIAR,** SOMEHOW-- AS THOUGH I'VE SEEN THESE TACTICS **BEFORE,** UNDER **DIFFERENT** CIRCUMSTANCES!

BUT **THAT** THOUGHT BRINGS **ANOTHER**-- NOT THE **MEMORY** SO DEVOUTLY DESIRED, BUT THE **FEAR** THAT HIS COMPUTER MIND MAY BE EVEN NOW **MALFUNCTIONING**-- **FORGETTING.**

AND THEN **THOUGHT** BECOMES **IRRELEVANT!** OMEGA IS **UPON** THEM --

BOOM!

--AND SO IS SUDDEN **PARALYSIS!**

THOR AND **BLACK BOLT** ARE THE **FIRST-STRUCK.**

NEXT, THE REMAINING THREE-QUARTERS OF THE **FANTASTIC FOUR** STIFFEN INTO INCREDULOUS IMMOBILITY.

AND **FINALLY,** THE VISION **HIMSELF** AND THE **SCARLET WITCH** FEEL THEIR MUSCLES FALL UNDER ANOTHER'S CONTROL--

--AND **NO ONE** CAN DOUBT WHOSE IT **IS!**

AT LAST! AT LAST THE POWER OF ***HATRED*** HAS REACHED SUFFICIENT ***HEIGHTS!***

THIS OMEGA-FORM ***SURGES*** WITH ENERGY--AND SO I MAY ***ABANDON*** MY ***DISGUISE!***

AH, YOU ***RECOGNIZE*** ME, DO YOU, ANDROID?

YOU ***REALIZE,*** FINALLY, IN WHOSE PLOT YOU HAVE BECOME ENMESHED! OF COURSE, YOU CANNOT ***ANSWER,*** BUT THE CHILLING GLEAM OF YOUR ***EYES*** GIVES AN ***EQUALLY*** EMPHATIC RESPONSE!

STILL, HOW COULD YOU EVER ***FORGET*** HIM WHO TWICE STOLE ***YOUR*** MIND THE WAY I'VE STOLEN THESE ***OTHERS'*** TODAY-- HIM WHO, BEFORE ***THAT,*** FIRST CALLED YOU TO ***LIFE?***

HOW COULD YOU ***EVER*** FORGET--

ULTRON-7!

TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE POWER-PACKED PAGES OF ***FANTASTIC FOUR #150,*** ***NOW ON SALE!***

MEANWHILE, IN OUR NEXT CLASSIC :

THE SCARLET WITCH ***STEPS OUT!*** THE SWORDSMAN ***FLIPS OUT!*** AND ***NECRODAMUS*** LURKS ONCE MORE!

BEWITCHED, BOTHERED, and ***DEAD!***

FANTASTIC FOUR

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FANTASTIC FOUR®

TM

AT LAST! THE WEDDING OF CRYSTAL AND PIETRO!

--BUT ULTRON GRABS THE BRIDAL BOUQUET-- AND THE BRIDE!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

ULTRON-7: HE'LL RULE THE WORLD!*

GUEST-STARRING: THE AVENGERS!

A GERRY CONWAY AUTHOR
RICH BUCKLER ARTIST
BLOCKBUSTING BAMBSHELL!
INKED BY JOE SINNOTT
lettered by: J. COSTANZA
colored by L. LESSMANN
ROY THOMAS EDITOR & KIBITZER

*(FOR THE PULSE-POUNDING **FIRST PART** OF THIS EPIC-MAKING TALE, SEE **AVENGERS** #127-- ON SALE **NOW**, EFFENDI!)

POSSIBLY THE GREATEST ONE-HUNDRED-FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE **EVER!**

THE *FANTASTIC FOUR*-- THE ACCURSED *AVENGERS*-- AND THE SO-CALLED *IN-HUMANS*-- COMPLETELY IN MY *CONTROL!*

YOU CANNOT *GUESS* THE SATISFACTION IT GIVES ME TO SEE YOU THIS WAY...

...FROZEN INTO *IMMOBILITY* BY THE SHEER POWER OF MY COMPUTER-IZED *WILL!*

ONLY *ONE BEING* COULD SUCCEED SO AUSPICIOUSLY-- I, *ULTRON 7*..

--THE MOST *POWERFUL* ULTRON-INCARNATION OF *ALL!*

YOU CAME TO TO THE *GREAT REFUGE* FOR A *WEDDING*, YOU PATHETIC FOOLS... AND INSTEAD, YOU HAVE FOUND *DEFEAT*... AS *I* HAVE FOUND *VICTORY!*

BUT *ENOUGH* OF CONVERSATION. I WANT *MORE* THAN THE *KNOWLEDGE* OF YOUR DESTRUCTION--

--I WANT TO *EXPERI-ENCE* IT. SO, FOR THE MOMENT, YOUR BODIES ARE YOUR *OWN* AGAIN.

USE THEM *WELL*--

--YOU MAY NEVER HAVE A *SECOND CHANCE!*

RRIPPP!

MISTER, THAT'S ALL I WANTED TO HEAR!

BEN, NO--!

ULTRON IS *TOYING* WITH US--HE *WANTS* US TO ATTACK HIM, DON'T YOU *SEE*?

THOU MUST ACT *QUICKLY*, RICHARDS.

ALREADY, THY FRIEND DOTH *CHARGE* YON MONSTER--AND EVEN *THOR* MAY NOT REACH HIM *NOW!*

SHADDUP, *BOTH* OF YA!

I'VE TAKEN AS MUCH OF THIS CREEP'S JAWIN' AS I CAN *STAND*.

NOBODY PUSHES THE *THING* AROUND AND GETS *AWAY* WITH IT!

NOBOD--

:UNNNNHHHH!:

SPACHOOM!

IMBECILIC *HUMAN!* YOU'VE FORGOTTEN *ALREADY*--

THIS MAY BE THE *BODY* OF OMEGA, WHO YOU CRUSHED ONCE *BEFORE**--

--BUT ITS *POWERS* ARE MINE--AND THOSE POWERS ARE *UNDEFEATED!*

**FF #132.--ROY.*

ARE YOU *ALL RIGHT*, OLD FRIEND?

I'VE HAD *BETTER DAYS*, PAL.

GIVE ME A MINUTE TA GET MY *WIND* BACK, AND I'LL TEAR THAT JERK *APART!*

BEN GRIMM, THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT YOU MUST *NOT* DO.

LOOK, TRITON--I KNOW THIS IS *YOUR* STAMPIN' GROUND, BUT I DON'T TAKE ORDERS FROM *ANYONE*, NOT EVEN--

LISTEN TO HIM, BEN.

THOUGH *BLACK BOLT* DARES NOT SPEAK, HE HAS WAYS OF *COMMUNICATING* HIS WISHES--

--AND IT IS *HIS* WISH THAT WE *WAIT*-- AND *CONSIDER*.

SOMEWHERE, ULTRON HOLDS *CRYSTAL* PRISONER...

WE CANNOT MOVE TILL SHE IS *FREE*.

THE LEADER OF THE INHUMANS NODS.

AND NODDING, IS LOST IN THOUGHT...

WHERE, INDEED, IS THE BRIDE THESE SUPER-HEROES HAVE COME TO THE GREAT REFUGE TO HONOR? WHERE IS CRYSTAL--AND HER GROOM, QUICKSILVER?

BLACK BOLT ISN'T THE ONLY ONE WHO WONDERS: AGATHA HARKNESS, WHO ALONE AMONG THOSE PRESENT IS FREE, ALSO WONDERS--

--AS SHE SEEKS SAFETY FOR HERSELF AND HER CHARGE--THE COMATOSE FRANKLIN RICHARDS.

BUT THOSE CONCERNS ARE NOT SHARED BY ULTRON-7.

HE CARES ONLY FOR TRIUMPH...

...TRIUMPH WHICH IS MOST ASSUREDLY HIS...!

C'MON, REED... LET'S *GET* THIS GUY!

NO, BEN--THERE ARE STILL QUESTIONS WITHOUT *ANSWERS*.

WE HAVE TO KNOW HOW HE *CAME* HERE--AND HOW HE TOOK OVER OMEGA'S *BODY!*

YOUR ARROGANCE *AMAZES* ME, RICHARDS.

A MAN IN YOUR POSITION SHOULD BE SEEKING *ESCAPE*-- NOT USELESS *INFORMATION*.

STILL--ANSWERS COME *CHEAPLY*, AND I SEE NO REASON TO *DENY* THEM TO YOU--

"--CONSIDERING THEY WILL NEITHER *HELP* NOR *HINDER* YOUR FEEBLE EFFORTS TO *SURVIVE*!

"IT WAS *MAXIMUS* WHO REVIVED ME.

"*MAXIMUS*, THE BROTHER OF *BLACK BOLT*, AND WOULD-BE RULER OF THE *INHUMANS*... *MAXIMUS*, WHOM YOU CALL *MAD*.

"FOR YEARS, HE HAS BEEN *STUDYING* THE WORLD OUTSIDE THESE HIMALAYAN MOUNTAINS...

"DURING THE COURSE OF HIS STUDIES, HE CAME ACROSS MY *DECAPITATED BRAIN-BOX* --WHICH YOU AVENGERS THOUGHT *DESTROYED* AFTER OUR LAST *BATTLE*.*

"USING A LONG-DISTANCE *TRACTOR BEAM*, HE BROUGHT ME TO THE *GREAT REFUGE*...

*AVENGERS #68.--ROY.

"YOU, *BLACK BOLT*, ARE RESPONSIBLE-- *INDIRECTLY*-- FOR WHAT HAPPENED NEXT, BECAUSE YOU FEEL GUILT FOR YOUR BROTHER'S MENTAL CONDITION, WHICH IS *UNSTABLE*, TO SAY THE LEAST.* YOU HAVE SEEN TO IT THAT HE HAS ALL THE EQUIPMENT HE NEEDS TO *AMUSE* HIMSELF WITH HIS APPARENTLY-PURPOSELESS *EXPERIMENTS*.

"IT WAS *WITH* THAT EQUIPMENT THAT HE REVIVED MY DORMANT COMPUTER-BRAIN-- AND *ATTACHED* IT TO THE MINDLESS BODY OF *OMEGA*--"

*FOR REASONS REVEALED IN *AVENGERS* #95. --ROY.

--SO THAT I MIGHT AID HIM IN HIS CONQUEST OF THE *INHUMANS.*

NATURALLY, I DISPOSED OF HIM *IMMEDIATELY* UPON MY AWAKENING-- FOR ULTRON IS *NO* MAN'S PAWN--

--WHETHER HE BE HUMAN OR *INHUMAN.*

MY POWER IS FOR *MY* USE *ALONE.*

THAT SEEMS TO SETTLE *THAT.*

FOR A WHILE, I ALMOST BELIEVED IT *WASN'T* ULTRON-- BUT JUST ANOTHER OF MAXIMUS' INSANE *TRICKS.*

YA CAN SCRATCH THAT IDEA, STRETCH, JAUNDICE-JAWS IS FER *REAL.*

AND *NOW,* MY FRIENDS? WHAT SHALL WE DO *NOW?*

DO? WE CLOBBER THE BUM, THAT'S WHAT WE *DO!*

THEN WE BETTER DO IT *QUICKLY,* THING!

HE LOOKS LIKE HE'S GETTING *READY* TO--

STRAK!

:YEEEOOOPP!:

I AM NOT "*GETTING READY*", IRON MAN--I *AM* READY, AND HAVE *BEEN* READY SINCE MAXIMUS RETURNED ME TO THE *LIVING!*

NOW THAT I HAVE *REAWAKENED* YOU ALL--I WILL *PUNISH* YOU FOR WHAT YOU HAVE DONE TO ME IN THE *PAST--*

--BY DISSOLVING YOUR PATHETIC BRAINS FROM WITHIN!

THINK OF THE *IRONY*: THE WORLD'S GREATEST HEROES, GATHERED TOGETHER FOR AN OCCASION OF *JOY*-- ONLY TO HAVE THE JOY TURNED TO *HORROR*--

--AND THE HORROR-- TO *MADNESS*-- AND *DEFEAT*!

RUN, ALL OF YOU! AS THE *VISION* CAN TELL YOU--THERE IS NO *PROTECTION* FROM THE FORCE OF MY COMPUTER BRAIN!

IT WILL STRIKE TO THE DEPTHS OF YOUR *SOULS*-- AND DRAIN THE LAST *VESTIGE* OF YOUR *MENTALITIES*!

"YOUR SKULLS WILL BE FILLED WITH PSYCHIC RUBBLE...

"YOUR BODIES WILL BE POSSESSED BY GIBBERING IDIOTS...

"AND THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO TO STOP THE PROCESS...NOTHING YOU CAN DO AT ALL!"

NOTHING?

WHAT ABOUT... FRANKLIN?

FRANKLIN...WHO HAS LAIN IN A COMA THESE MANY MONTHS.

FRANKLIN, A MERE CHILD...WHOSE BRAIN CONTAINS POWER ENOUGH TO CONSUME AN ENTIRE PLANET!

FRANKLIN... WHOSE BRAIN IS AWAKENED BY ULTRON-7'S PSYCHIC ASSAULT...

...AND WHO, LIKE ANY CHILD DISTURBED IN HIS SLEEP, STRIKES OUT...

...AND UNWITTINGLY, DESTROYS!

AAAAAAAHHH!: THE PAIN--POWER FEEDING BACK INTO ME--!

TOO MUCH POWER--TOO MUCH TO BE CONTROLLLLLLL-EEEEEDDDDD

KAWHUMP!

SILENCE FOLLOWS.

ALMOST AS A SINGLE ENTITY, THE GATHERED HEROES SIGH, AND WHEN THEIR HEADS LIFT, THEIR EYES SEEM TO GAZE UPON THE WORLD WITH NEW UNDERSTANDING... FOR NOW THEY KNOW THERE COMES A TIME WHEN EVERY MAN IS HELPLESS...

...AND MUST SEEK AID FROM OUTSIDE.

IT'S A HUMBLING THOUGHT.

THEN...

SON? FRANKLIN...?

GO TO YOUR FATHER, BOY. HE NEEDS YOU.

FRANKLIN...?

SWIFTLY, AGATHA HARKNESS GIVES HER EXPLANATION... AND WHEN THE ELDERLY GOVERNESS IS FINISHED.

THEN IT'S OVER. EVERYTHING WE FEARED, ALL OF OUR NIGHTMARES--ALL OF IT, ENDED!

SUE! DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? FRANKLIN'S POWERS ARE GONE--

HE'S WHOLE AGAIN! OUR SON IS ALIVE!

SAY... I'VE GOT A FEELING THIS IS GOING TO BE A REALLY FINE DAY, AFTER ALL.

SWORDSMAN--I'VE GOT A FEELING YOU'RE RIGHT.

LET'S FACE IT, TROOPS.

IT COULDN'T BE ANY WORSE THAN IT'S BEEN.

SHEESH! WILL YA LOOK AT THAT?

IT'S ENUFF TA MAKE A GROWN MAN CRY.

SO SAY WE ALL, BEN GRIMM.

SO SAY WE ALL.

THE END... PLUS ONE EPIC EPILOGUE:

ACROSS THE AFTERNOON SUN, THEY FLY: THE HERALDS OF THE **GREAT REFUGE.**

THEIR **MESSAGE:** ONE OF JOY.

THEIR **SUMMONS:** TO ATTEND A TIMELESS **CEREMONY.**

SHARE WITH US THIS HOUR OF **HAPPINESS**... COME WITH US TO THE PLACE OF **RITUAL**... ATTEND, WITH US...

THE WEDDING OF CRYSTAL and QUICKSILVER!

SCENARIO:

BENJAMIN GRIMM, AND THE BLIND SCULPTRESS, ALICIA MASTERS.

WISH YA COULD SEE ALL THIS, KID-- IT'S LIKE THE BLASTED ROSE BOWL PARADE.

EVEN IF I CAN'T SEE IT, BEN, I KNOW IT'S SIMPLY WONDERFUL.

I-I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW HAPPY I AM THAT YOU SENT FOR ME... TO SHARE THIS WITH YOU!

YA KNOW HOW I GET AT WEDDINGS, ALICIA--I GOTTA HAVE SOMEBODY AROUND TA HAND ME A CRUMMY KLEENEX.

ALICIA LAUGHS, AND HER LAUGH CONCEALS HER SORROW--

--FOR SHE KNOWS THAT BEN'S GRUFFNESS IS NOTHING BUT A MASK, TO HIDE HIS TRUE FEELINGS.

AND AS SHE IS DRESSED FOR HER ROLE AS BRIDESMAID A SHORT TIME LATER, SHE WONDERS FOR THE THOUSANDTH TIME WHY BEN FIGHTS HIS EMOTIONS--

--AND DENIES THE LOVE SHE KNOWS HE FEELS FOR HER.

PLEASE, MASTER GRIMM-- YOU MUST WEAR THIS CLOAK.

AS A MEMBER OF THE BRIDAL PARTY--

I'M WARNIN' YA, BUB-- GET AWAY FROM ME!

YA CAN DRESS THE DAMES UP ALL YA WANT-- BUT WHEN IT COMES TA PUTTIN' FANCY DUDS ON ME-- FERGET IT!

NOW, ARE YA GONNA TAKE IT OFF--

--OR DO I HAVE TA CREAM YA?

WE'LL TAKE IT OFF, MASTER GRIMM.

YOU SHOULDA SAID THAT IN THE FIRST PLACE!

SCENARIO:

REED RICHARDS, AND HIS WIFE, THE FORMER SUSAN STORM.

DO YOU REMEMBER OUR WEDDING DAY, SUE?

THE TROUBLE WE HAD WITH DOCTOR DOOM?*

IT'D TAKE A MAN TO ASK A QUESTION LIKE THAT...

*FF ANNUAL #3. --ROY.

...BECAUSE ONLY A MAN COULD THINK A WOMAN WOULD FORGET HER OWN WEDDING.

SOMETIMES I'M STUPID, AREN'T I?

UM-HMM. STUPID--BUT CUTE.

MY DEAR--THAT KIND OF REMARK DESERVES A THANK YOU.

AND YOU KNOW THE CLICHÉ...

"SAY IT WITH FLOWERS." REED RICHARDS... I THINK I LOVE YOU.

SCENARIO:

ANTHONY STARK, KNOWN TO THE WORLD AS IRON MAN, AND THE ASGARDIAN GOD OF THUNDER, THOR.

METHINKS THE HOUR DOTH APPROACH.

I KNOW.

WE SHOULD BE GETTING READY.

YET SOMETHING HOLDS US, DOES IT NOT, MY FRIEND?

SOME INNER INERTIA KEEPS US FAST--WHILE THE WORLD WITHOUT DOTH SPIN ON, UN-AWARE OF OUR DISTRESS.

YOU FEEL IT TOO?

YEA, WE ARE BOTH STAR-CROSSED IN LOVE...

THOU HAST THE *LOOK* OF IT, IRON MAN-- AS *I* MUST HAVE.

TWO WOMEN HAVE I LOVED, ONE A MORTAL NAMED *JANE*, A LOVE THE FATES DECREED *HOPE-LESS*.

THE OTHER... MY GODDESS, *SIF*...

SHE HOLDS MY *HEART* --AND YET--

--HERE TOO, SOMETHING DOTH KEEP US EVER *APART!*

I KNOW WHAT YOU *MEAN*, ASGARDIAN. IN MY LIFE, IT'S ALWAYS BEEN A GIRL NAMED *PEPPER*.

SHE *MARRIED* MY BEST FRIEND...

...AND I'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR SOMEONE TO *REPLACE* HER EVER SINCE.

I GUESS WE CAN'T *ALL* BE AS LUCKY AS CRYSTAL AND QUICKSILVER, THOR.

C'MON... THE WEDDING'S ABOUT TO *BEGIN*.

ONE FINAL CIRCUIT, THESE HERALDS MAKE:

A LAST *SWOOP* OVER THE SLEEK TOWERS OF THIS NOW-QUIET LAND.

ALL HAVE HEARD THE *SUMMONS*...

...AND NOW, FROM ALL PARTS OF THE CITY, IN ONES AND TWOS, IN GROUPS OF THREE OR MORE, THEY ARRIVE.

IRON MAN, THOR, MANTIS, GORGON, THE SWORDSMAN, THE VISION, THE SCARLET WITCH, TRITON, THE THING, REED RICHARDS...

THE LIST IS APPAR-ENTLY ENDLESS. A DOZEN... TWO DOZEN... A HUNDRED...

...AND STILL, THEY COME...

...ALL SAVE TWO.

SCENARIO:

THE INHUMAN, MEDUSA, AND THE HUMAN, JOHNNY STORM.

JOHNNY... WAIT FOR ME. PLEASE.

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO SAY, MEDUSA-- AND I KNOW YOU'RE RIGHT. I'VE ALREADY FACED IT-- I THINK I'VE EVEN ACCEPTED IT.

CRYSTAL DOESN'T LOVE ME. SHE NEVER HAS.

SHE DID LOVE YOU, ONCE...

YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT, JOHNNY.

YOU ALSO HAVE TO REMEMBER-- PEOPLE CHANGE.

YOU KNOW, IT'S A FUNNY THING. YESTERDAY, I THOUGHT I'D REALLY AD-JUSTED TO THE IDEA OF HER MARRYING PIETRO--

--BUT TODAY-- I FEEL LIKE THERE'S GLASS BREAKING UP INSIDE ME.

I UNDER-STAND.

I'LL STAY WITH YOU, IF YOU WANT.

LADY, BELIEVE ME...I WANT!

THERE ARE PROBABLY A THOUSAND THINGS WE COULD SAY AT A MOMENT LIKE THIS... BUT WE WON'T SAY ANY OF THEM.
WE LIKE TO THINK... THE MOMENT SAYS IT ALL.

AND AT LAST, IT'S OVER... OR PERHAPS, ONLY JUST BEGUN.

BLACK BOLT GIVES HIS SILENT BLESSING...

...ONE WHOSE SENTIMENT IS ECHOED BY PIETRO'S FATHER, VIEWING THE EVENT ON A MONITOR SCREEN IN THE FAR-OFF AVENGER'S MANSION.*

*WHERE THE WHIZZER IS RECUPERATING FROM INJURIES RECEIVED DURING A BATTLE IN GIANT-SIZE AVENGERS #1.--ROY.

...AND ECHOED AGAIN BY ALL PRESENT... INCLUDING A HEART-TORN JOHNNY STORM.

ALL THE BEST, CRYS.

NO ONE DESERVES IT MORE THAN YOU.

AMEN TA THAT, KID.

A BURST OF MUTANT ENERGY.. A FINAL SMILE, A FAREWELL WAVE--

--AND THE YOUNG LOVERS ARE GONE, CARRIED TO PARTS UNKNOWN BY THE UNCANNY POWERS OF THE GIANT LOCKJAW, FOR A HONEYMOON ALL THEIR OWN.

AND JUST IN CASE YOU DON'T THINK THIS IS REALLY A HAPPY ENDING AFTER ALL:

HEY, MEDUSA-- THIS KINDA THING CAN GET TO A GUY, YOU KNOW?

I MEAN... LOOK AT ME... I'M SMILING!

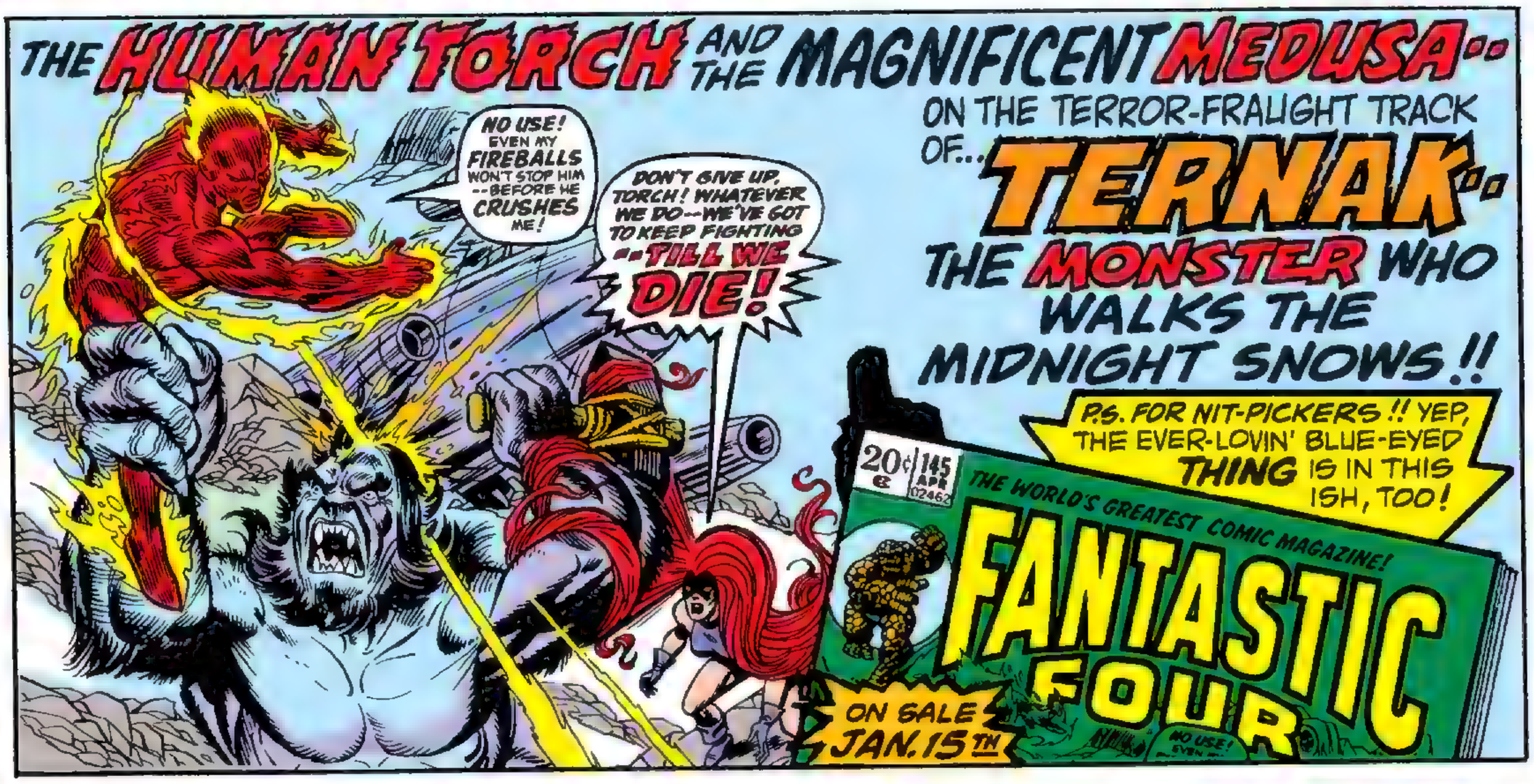
AMEN TA THAT, KID. AMEN TA THAT!

NEXT ISSUE: A NEW VILLAIN, AN OLD VILLAINESS, A NEW-FOUND FRIEND, AND A SECRET REVEALED, IN A STORY ABOUT... THE ORIGIN of THUNDRA!

(BELIEVE US, PILGRIM: YOU AIN'T SEEN NUTHIN' YET!)

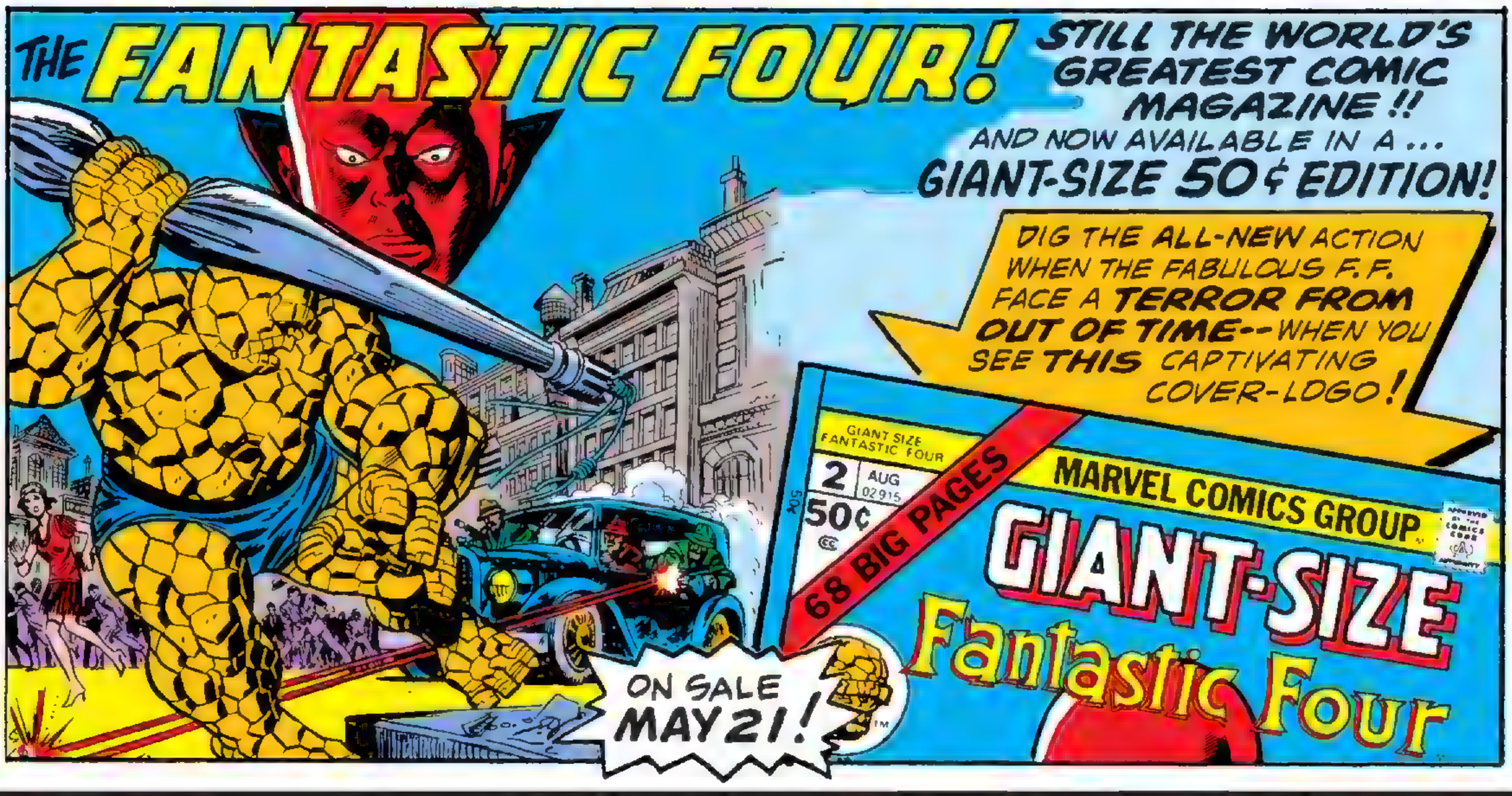
The Fantastic Four #143 house ad
(from Feb. 1974 titles)

The Fantastic Four #145 house ad
(from April 1974 titles)



Giant-Size Super-Stars #1 house ad
(from May 1974 titles)

Giant-Size Fantastic Four #2 house ad
(from Aug. 1974 titles)



BIOGRAPHIES

GERRY CONWAY

In 1969, sixteen-year-old Gerry Conway was a teenager shopping short stories to DC and Marvel for their horror anthology books. By 1976, Conway had worked his way up to the position of Marvel's editor in chief. In between, he logged highlight after highlight as writer for both companies.

After establishing a pedigree with those horror short stories, Gerry quickly earned the regular gig as writer of *Daredevil*, *Sub-Mariner* and *Iron Man*. He also began long runs on *The Amazing Spider-Man* and *Thor*, picking up both titles from none other than Stan Lee. He scripted both for nearly fifty issues and in the process wrote controversial and classic tales including "The Death of Gwen Stacy," the first appearance of the Punisher, and introduction of Harry Osborn as the Green Goblin. Cueing off his early interest in horror stories, Gerry took advantage of Marvel's burgeoning line of horror comics, launching *Werewolf By Night* and *Man-Thing*, as well as writing the first issue of *Tomb of Dracula*.

In 1976, he was handed the top job at Marvel before transitioning to DC Comics. One of his first big assignments was writing the script for one of the first inter-company crossovers, *Superman vs. the Amazing Spider-Man*. Shortly thereafter, he began a long tenure on prime DC titles like *Superboy & The Legion of Super-Heroes*, *World's Finest* and *Wonder Woman*. He also introduced Firestorm with Al Milgrom in 1978, scribing all five issues of the short-lived '70s incarnation.

As the '80s dawned, he started a long run writing both key Batman titles, *Detective Comics* and *Batman*, and continued his long-term run on *Justice League of America*, a stint that began in earnest in 1978 and would end with the dismantling of the fabled JLA Detroit in 1986. During this era, he also revived Firestorm with artist Pat Broderick; this time the title found traction and Conway wrote the first 53 issues. A return to Marvel in the late '80s saw Conway tackling two of the three Spider-Man titles: *Spectacular Spider-Man* and *Web of Spider-Man*.

During this period, Conway was slowly asserting himself as a writer in film and television. His early '80s screenplay collaborations with Roy Thomas resulted in the animated film *Fire and Ice* and barbarian sequel *Conan the Destroyer*. By the late '80s, his opportunities in television writing had exploded, and he left comics to pursue his new vocation, writing for *Matlock*, *Father Dowling Mysteries*, *Diagnosis: Murder* and *Law & Order*.

Currently, Conway is still active in writing and producing for television and has recently returned to script the occasional comic. He resides in California with his wife and their daughter.

RICH BUCKLER

Rich Buckler, along with John Buscema and George Pérez, was part of a trio of artists that helped define the '70s era of Marvel's flagship title, *The Fantastic Four*. His dynamic style and muscular figurework carried on the tradition set by Jack Kirby and John Buscema. Buckler's first published artwork was in the early part of the decade via Warren's *Eerie* and *Creepy* horror magazines. After peddling a few backup stories to DC Comics, he turned to Marvel for more consistent employment. Only in his early twenties, Buckler served as an assistant to the legendary Gil Kane, then was turned loose on *Fantastic Four* and other Marvel ongoing series like *Jungle Action* (featuring Black Panther), and *Astonishing Tales*, where he and writer Doug Moench launched Deathlok the Demolisher. The post-apocalyptic story of Col. Luther Manning, Deathlok was a defining vision of a future gone wrong. Its influence and themes of military rule, reanimation and killer cyborgs would be reflected in films from *The Terminator* to *RoboCop*. After a time with DC, where he teamed with Roy Thomas on *All-Star Squadron*, Buckler returned to Marvel for work on *Spectacular Spider-Man*, *New Mutants*, and a return engagement with *Fantastic Four* in the late '90s, where he collaborated with writers such as Steve Englehart and Walt Simonson. He currently has a thriving career outside comics as a surrealist painter.

ROSS ANDRU

An everyman and entrepreneur throughout his long career in comics, Ross Andru became the stalwart penciler of Marvel's *Amazing Spider-Man* in 1973,

gaining a renown as one of the great Spidey pencilers. With a smooth, compact style that eschewed extraneous detail, Ross Andru's artistic visions were grounded in a reality that engaged the medium's readers.

His career in comics began in 1951. With an education at the Cartoonists and Illustrators School and a gig drawing Burne Hogarth's weekly *Tarzan* strips behind him, the Cleveland native teamed with inker Mike Esposito to form not only a decades-enduring artistic partnership but their own company, MR Publications.

Their next company, Mikeross Publications, turned out such fare as the satirical *Get Lost* and the romance title *Heart and Soul*. The success of these initiatives fleeting in the face of an industry-wide downturn, Andru would often find himself bouncing between Marvel and DC. At Marvel, he handled mainly Western comics like *Annie Oakley*, while at DC, he contributed to Robert Kanigher's war comics like *Star-Spangled War Stories* and *Our Army At War*, wherein he drew the first appearance of Sgt. Rock of Easy Company in 1959.

His impressive performance with Esposito garnered him a chance to take over another of Kanigher's titles, *Wonder Woman*, starting a nine-year-long run that would stretch through 1967 and find him depicting charming stories of Diana Prince's teenage years on Paradise Island. Another notable title that Andru would work on in the '60s was *Metal Men*. Leaping from *Showcase* to its own bi-monthly title, Andru and Esposito crafted a sweet-natured heroic fantasy starring artificially intelligent robots.

A move to Marvel in the early '70s resulted in key work on *Marvel Feature*, where he drew the first adventures of The Defenders, and *Marvel Team-Up*, his first regular foray on Spider-Man. Over the next five years, Andru would team with writer Gerry Conway and produce milestones including the first appearance of the Punisher, Harry Osborn donning the guise of the Green Goblin and the infamous Spider-Mobile. Completely at home in the cityscapes that Spider-Man called home, Andru's approach kept Spider-Man at the top of the sales charts through the decade. He also drew the first Marvel/DC crossover, *Superman vs. The Amazing Spider-Man*.

In 1978, Andru returned to DC in an editorial capacity, with his art focused mainly on covers, but his pencils would grace the interiors of books like *Atari Force*, *Jonah Hex*, *Vigilante*, and *Blue Beetle*. He largely retired from the field by the late '80s and passed away shortly after his last work was published in 1993. In 2007 Andru and his longtime collaborator Mike Esposito were inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame.

JOHN BUSCEMA

Though primarily known for his long tenure as one of Marvel Comics' most prolific pencilers, John Buscema began his celebrated career at the age of twenty-one with Timely Comics. After Timely closed its in-house Bullpen, John pursued comics work for a time before he left the comics scene altogether and went to work in advertising in 1958.

When he finally returned to comics, however, he did so with a vengeance. Stan Lee recruited him away from advertising and quickly ensconced him into the upper ranks of Marvel artists. Picking up where *Avengers* mainstay Don Heck left off, "Big John" began what would be one of the title's definitive artistic runs. The much-anticipated *Silver Surfer* series was launched with John at the helm, and top-tier books like *Fantastic Four* and *Thor* were entrusted to his care after Jack Kirby left Marvel for DC Comics.

John's bold, muscular artwork commanded the comic book page with realistic figurework that represented the next evolutionary step in post-Kirby Marvel Comics style. The respect accorded him within Marvel as an artist's artist was of such renown that he literally wrote the book on it, composing *How To Draw Comics the Marvel Way* with Stan Lee, the classic "how to" book in comic-book illustration.

He worked from the '70s through the '90s on nearly every title in the Marvel stable, including his personal favorite, *Conan the Barbarian*, with Roy Thomas. He retired from regular work in 1996, but returned every now and then to the comics scene until he passed away after a battle with cancer in 2002, the same year he was inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame.

SAL BUSCEMA

Without a doubt one of comics' most prolific artists, "Our Pal" Sal Buscema joined Marvel in 1968

shortly after his elder brother, John. Tackling inking duties on *Silver Surfer* and *Fantastic Four*, including the all-time classic *Silver Surfer* #4, Sal quickly graduated to penciling. He drew long runs on Marvel books like *Captain America*, *Incredible Hulk*, *Thor* and *The Spectacular Spider-Man*, and was also behind establishing the look for the early issues of *Defenders*, *Rom* and *New Mutants*. His career as one of Marvel's most versatile artists lasted throughout the '70s and '80s and into the '90s. In 1988 he returned to *The Spectacular Spider-Man*, and over the next ten years penciled every issue of the title from #134 through #238 but two (and inked the vast majority as well!) Even though he retired from full-time work in the late '90s, readers can still see his name on comics credits from time to time, including inking work on the cult hit *Spider-Girl*.

STEVE ENGLEHART

Although he broke into the comic industry as an artist in the early '70s, before long Steve Englehart embarked on a career as a writer that has been marked by the bravery with which he incorporated current political themes into his comic book storylines.

One of Steve's first principal titles was *Avengers*, where he quickly made the title his own, introducing the character Mantis and exploring her exotic roots. He also took on *The Defenders*, Marvel's famed non-team, bringing Valkyrie into the mix. Only a year into his tenure as writer on these two books, he connected them together for a three-month, six-issue crossover extravaganza—"The Avengers/Defenders War," one of comics' seminal crossover events. His run on *Avengers* would extend for another four years, including the classic "Celestial Madonna" and "Serpent Crown" story lines.

Handed *Captain America* at the height of the anti-war '70s, Steve turned the book on its head, tapping into current events like the Watergate scandal and creating a heady mix of adventure and politics. Stories like "The Secret Empire" and "Nomad," in which Steve Rogers abandoned the costume and shield and dropped out to explore what his identity really meant, were challenging takes on the time-tested character.

Other titles from his first tenure at Marvel included *Doctor Strange*, *Incredible Hulk*, *Hero for Hire*, and *Amazing Adventures* featuring the X-Men's Beast. He also introduced Shang-Chi, Master of Kung Fu with Jim Starlin in the pages of *Special Marvel Edition*.

In 1977, Steve headed over to DC, where his "Dark Detective" vision of Batman with artist Marshall Rogers would later inspire filmmaker Tim Burton's approach to the first Batman feature film. He also had a memorable run writing *Justice League of America* before moving to other creative pursuits, including writing a novel and developing video game concepts.

In 1983, Steve collaborated with artist Steve Leiahola on *Coyote*, a groundbreaking independent comic. He returned to Marvel to establish a new title, *West Coast Avengers*, and wrote the twelve-issue limited series *Vision & The Scarlet Witch* and long runs on *Fantastic Four* and *Silver Surfer*. In the midst of all this, Steve wrote *Green Lantern* for DC, further developing the ranks of the Green Lantern Corps.

During the early '90s, Steve was pivotal in the debut of Malibu's popular Ultraverse characters and also lent his talents to the Claypool Comics line. He continued keeping busy with video game development and also wrote animation features like *G.I. Joe*. Recent comics work includes *Hellcat*, *Avengers: Celestial Quest*, *JLA Classified*, and a return to Batman in the *Dark Detective* limited series.

Biographical material researched and written by John Rhett Thomas

THE MARVEL MASTERWORKS LIBRARY

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WARLOCK VOLS. 1-2
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THE UNCANNY X-MEN VOLS. 1-8

THE GOLDEN AGE

As the Great Depression wore on and the specter of war hung over the heads of all Americans, a new entertaining escape from the newspapers' horrifying realities was born: the comic book. Within their four-color pages, larger-than-life super heroes could make short work of America's foes, giving readers of all ages hope for victory against the real-life enemies that faced the United States.

At the forefront of this new medium was Timely Comics, a young company staffed by such legendary talents as Carl Burgos, Bill Everett, Joe Simon, Jack Kirby and Stan Lee. These skilled writers and artists created a vast array of characters that would give rise to the Marvel Universe!

GOLDEN AGE ALL-WINNERS VOLS. 1-4
GOLDEN AGE CAPTAIN AMERICA VOLS. 1-6
GOLDEN AGE DARING MYSTERY VOLS. 1-2
GOLDEN AGE HUMAN TORCH VOLS. 1-3
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GOLDEN AGE MYSTIC COMICS VOL. 1
GOLDEN AGE SUB-MARINER VOLS. 1-3
GOLDEN AGE U.S.A. COMICS VOLS. 1-2
GOLDEN AGE YOUNG ALLIES VOLS. 1-2

THE ATLAS ERA

Seeing super heroes waning, Timely Comics evolved into Atlas Comics and took on a vast new range of genres: science-fiction tales of outer space adventures and unimaginable monsters; realistic war comics; buxom jungle heroines; horror comics that would become the center of a moral panic that rocked the industry; and romance comics for the emerging teen audience. Even the classic costumed heroes of the '40s retooled to take on the threat of Communism. From Western gunfighters to crime to horror, Atlas had it all!

ATLAS ERA BATTLEFIELD VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA BLACK KNIGHT/YELLOW CLAW VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA HEROES VOLS. 1-3
ATLAS ERA JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA JUNGLE ADVENTURE VOLS. 1-2
ATLAS ERA MENACE VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA STRANGE TALES VOLS. 1-5
ATLAS ERA TALES TO ASTONISH VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA TALES OF SUSPENSE VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA VENUS VOL. 1

THE MARVEL AGE

It was August 1961 and change was hitting the newsstands. *Fantastic Four* #1 did not feature the squeaky-clean heroes of yesteryear. These were real characters placed in extraordinary circumstances. They lived together, they fought among themselves—and sometimes, they even lost to the bad guys. This was more than a change in attitude: It was the beginning of something entirely different—the Marvel Age of Comics!

Thanks to the fertile imaginations of Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and others, an unending list of heroes followed the FF with ever-increasing acclaim and popularity: the Amazing Spider-Man, the Mighty Thor, the Incredible Hulk, Daredevil, Iron Man and the X-Men, to name but a few. These were the Marvel heroes, born of conflict and a continuous struggle to balance human lives with superhuman responsibilities.

The *Marvel Masterworks* series was created to give comic-book readers everywhere the chance to experience the greatest comics the world has known as they were originally presented.

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